#73 The Magazine of Adventure Gaming $3.00

Space Gamer

ADVENTURING IN THE CITY

THIEVES' GUILD/HAVEN

ROLEPLAYING TOLKIEN

12 PAGES OF CAPSULE REVIEWS

A Major New Challenge in Roleplaying:
Survival in the War-Torn World of

TWILIGHT: 2000

Welcome to 2000 AD. World War III began five years ago. It's still going on, but that's the least of your problems. A few days ago, you were soldiers in the U.S. 5th Division. Now you're just fighting to survive while the world falls apart around you.

The real trick in game design is to produce detailed, accurate effects with simple systems. That's what we did in Twilight: 2000.

Combat: Everything from a kick in the head to an artillery barrage on an M1E2 tank is settled by answering three questions: did you hit? where did you hit? and how hard did you hit? Coolness under fire is a major factor in combat—inexperienced characters may panic and freeze.

Skills: There are nearly 50 skills. Any task can be resolved by determining its difficulty and the applicable skill or attribute. Many tasks are described in the rules, and it's easy to resolve others. Skills can be improved by experience, study, and observation.

Survival: Rules are provided for everything needed to keep people and vehicles running: finding food and fuel, repair and maintenance, avoiding radiation and disease—everything from alcohol distillation to grenade fishing.

Encounters: Immense variety of encounters results from a few die rolls: people of all kinds—enemy units, traders, bandits, refugees—plus towns and farmhouses, animals, wrecked vehicles, and more. Rules for NPC motivations quickly flesh out important NPCs with complex motives.

Equipment: All kinds of equipment—the advanced military gear of 1995 and the primitive makeshifts of 2000—are covered. Because vehicles are rare, they can be described in great detail without slowing the game.

Background: Extensive background notes are included: a lengthy chronology of the war's first five years and notes on conditions in central Europe. A beginning adventure, ***Escape from Kalisz***, forms the basis of a whole campaign, with information on enemy units, nearby towns, rumors and prisoner interrogations, and radio traffic, plus an account of the death of 5th division and the division's last issued intelligence briefing.

Modules: GDW will be issuing a series of adventure modules, with new background information for your campaigns. Watch for the first soon: ***The Free City of Krakow***. With a large city militia (once the Polish 8th Motorized Division), working factories, and—so the rumor goes—electric power, Krakow is strong enough to declare its neutrality. It's a major center for what trade remains and—like Istanbul in the 30's—is crawling with the espionage services of both sides.

$16 at your local hobby shop or direct from GDW. Write for our free catalog.

GDW **Game Designers' Workshop**
P.O. Box 1646
Bloomington, Illinois 61702-1646

Space Gamer

Number 73
Mar/Apr 1985

Editor-In-Chief: Warren Spector
Assistant Editor: Allen Varney
News Editor: Scott Haring
Contributing Editors: William A. Barton
Matthew J. Costello
Jerry Epperson
Rick Swan

Publisher: Steve Jackson
Production Manager: Marie Mahoney
Production Staff: C. Mara Lee
Kim Strombo

Business Manager: Mark Chandler
Advertising Manager: Caroline Chase
Circulation Manager: Creede Lambard

ART IN THIS ISSUE

Cover: ***Haven,*** courtesy Gamelords, Ltd. (Graphics by C. Mara Lee.)

Line Art: Jim Stanislaw: 11. Kim Strombo: 24, 29. Allen Varney: FM, 10, 30. Speed Webber: 27. Pat Zircher: 3.

Game Art: Gamelords, Ltd: 15-21. Games Workshop: 23. Iron Crown Enterprises: 6, 8, 9. Steve Jackson Games Inc.: 10.

Most game names are trademarks of the companies publishing those games. In particular: ***Dungeons & Dragons, Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, D&D, AD&D, Top Secret, Star Frontiers, Adventures of Indiana Jones,*** *Dragon*, and ***Air War*** are trademarks of TSR, Inc.; ***Marvel Super Heroes*** and all Marvel characters, of the Marvel Comics Group; all Middle-earth products, of Iron Crown Enterprises; ***Thieves' Guild*** and ***Haven***, of Gamelords, Ltd.; ***Talisman***, of Games Workshop; ***Realms of Sword and Thunder***, of Empire Games Inc; ***Traveller***, of Game Designers' Workshop; ***Champions*** and ***Danger International***, of Hero Games; ***Space Opera*** and ***Villains and Vigilantes***, of Fantasy Games Unlimited; ***Tunnels & Trolls***, of Blade/Flying Buffalo; ***Empire of the Petal Throne***, of Gamescience; ***Superworld*** and ***Call of Cthulhu***, of Chaosium; and ***RuneQuest*** and ***Squad Leader***, of The Avalon Hill Game Company. Use of a trademark to identify a product commented on in this magazine should not be construed as implying the sponsorship of the trademark holder. ***Ogre, Illuminati, Autoduel, Convoy, Cardboard Heroes, Undead, Killer,*** the all-seeing pyramid, and the distinctive likeness of the Ogre are registered trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Inc. All names of other games published by Steve Jackson Games Inc. are trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Inc., or used under license. Use of the name of any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

SPECIAL SECTION

Cities

They're neglected sites for your fantasy roleplaying scenarios. An in-depth article and a featured review of one major city-in-a-box help you grapple with the urban environment. We don't say it will keep you alive on New York's subways, but . . .

Adventuring in the City • Mike Beeman 15
Thieves' Guild/Haven **Review • Rick Swan** 19

ARTICLES

Umbar **Designer's Notes • Brenda Gates Spielman**
A Middle-earth module designer talks 9

Strategy in *GLOBBO* • Philip Rennert
This is for real 10

Starship Piloting in *Champions* • S. Bowne and P. Woods
Send your spies and heroes on galactic adventures 11

Pre-enlistment Skills in *Traveller* • Warren Okuma
What about kids? They have no skills? Pshaw 13

Alternate Character Classes for *Space Opera* • Stefan Jones
Businessmen, Bureaucrats, Athletes, and Rogues 24

Multiple-Power Aliens for *Cosmic Encounter* • Allen Varney 30

REVIEWS

I.C.E.'s Middle-earth Modules • William A. Barton
Iron Crown Enterprises explores Tolkien's world 6

Talisman **• Matthew J. Costello**
Games Workshop's magical quest game 23

Keeping Posted: *Realms of Sword and Thunder* • Jim Gould
Post-Arthurian England by mail 27

Capsule Reviews 31

GAMES: ***The Adventures of Indiana Jones, Champions*** (Third Edition), ***Super Squadron, Battlestar Galactica, Pyramid, Passage to Cathay, The Mystic Wood.*** **SUPPLEMENTS:** ***Atlas of the Imperium, Vargr, Dragons of Flame, Conan Unchained, Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure, Enemies III, Daredevil Adventures Vol. 2 No. 3 — Supernatural Thrillers Issue, Cloudland, Horrible Secret of Monhegan Island, When A Star Falls, Empire of Karo, Treasure Vault, Midnight on Dagger Street, Curse of the Chthonians, Rahasia, Battle Above the Earth, Border Crossing, Triad, Forces of Fantasy, Lightning Bolts & Lasers.*** **PLAY AIDS:** ***Star Fleet Battles Reinforcements, Cardboard Heroes Champions Set 3: Enemies.*** **COMPUTER GAMES:** ***VODAC: The Alpine Encounter, Enchanter.*** **PUBLICATIONS:** *Tortured Souls, Arms and Armor, Palladium Book of Exotic Weapons.* **MINIATURES:** *Dungeon Raiders, Dragon Killers,* ***Call of Cthulhu*** *Miniatures, The Outcasts, Dark Horse Miniatures, Conan Miniatures, Crimson Dragon Miniatures.*

REGULAR FEATURES

Counter Intelligence • Warren Spector 2
Letters 3
Where We're Going • Steve Jackson 29
Scanner/Index to Advertisers 45
Convention Calendar 47
Murphy's Rules • Michael von Glahn 48

Space Gamer (ISSN 0194-9977, USPS 434-250) is published bi-monthly by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-7957. Second class postage paid at Austin, TX. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SJ Games Inc., P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957.

All material is copyright © 1985 by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. All rights reserved.

Printed in U.S.A. by Futura Press, Austin.

Subscription rates, effective 10/1/84: In the United States — 6 months (3 issues) $8; one year (6 issues) $13; 2 years (12 issues) $23. A lifetime subscription is $200. In Canada, add 50¢ per issue for postage and handling; for addresses outside the U.S. and Canada, add $1 per issue for surface mail. Texas residents please add 5⅛% sales tax. International rates subject to change as postal rates change. *Note:* All payments MUST be in U.S. dollars, made by International Money Order, or checks drawn on a U.S. or Canadian bank.

The Game Magazine Game

Game magazines: They're popping up like roses . . . and dropping like flies. I've been giving this problem some thought (as you might expect given the fact that I'm responsible for overseeing the production of *Space Gamer*). Let's start out with a few facts and see if any patterns emerge:

Last year, Steve Jackson Games published four magazines — *Space Gamer* (along with TSR's *Dragon*, the longest-lived publication devoted to fantasy and sf gaming), *Fantasy Gamer*, *Fire & Movement*, and *Autoduel Quarterly;* today, SJ Games publishes just two — *Space Gamer* and *ADQ* (see Scanner, page 47). Last year, Chaosium published *Different Worlds;* now, they'll no longer be involved with that publication (see Scanner, page 46). Last year, *Gaming Universal* appeared; now it is no more (see, you guessed it, Scanner, page 47). Last year saw the demise of *Gameplay*, *Adventure Gaming*, and *Ares* (the SF section in *Dragon* may carry that name, but it hardly counts). And when was the last time you saw an issue of *Pegasus* or *Sorcerer's Apprentice?*

There are three ways to approach the game magazine business. First, you can enter the field as a game publisher who happens to publish magazines on the side. (SJ Games falls into this category with *Space Gamer)*. Second, you can be a game company publishing a house organ, a magazine that's one long supplement for your own products. (Throw SJ Games' *Autoduel Quarterly*, Hero Games, TSR, GDW, Task Force, and Flying Buffalo into this category.) Finally, you can start a company with no other purpose than to publish magazines.

Ah, a pattern begins to emerge, a distressing pattern if you happen to be a *Space Gamer* fan. Look again at the list of folks jumping into game magazine publishing — all house organs and magazine specialists.

The house organ is a promotional tool. If it is published in support of a healthy product (***Star Trek***, ***Champions***, or ***Car Wars***, for example), it's got a pretty good shot at making money: A good portion of that product's fans are sure to buy a magazine devoted entirely to their favorite game; they're a built-in audience for a pre-sold property. But, in a very real sense, whether a house organ makes money is beside the point: It just promotes a product; any money it makes is gravy.

Space Gamer's circulation hasn't changed a lick — up *or* down — in years. We are doomed, it seems, to break even. Barely. Sometimes.

Even *Dragon* magazine, with by far the largest circulation of any game magazine (close to 130,000 per issue), appears to be suffering — there are persistent rumors (repeatedly denied) that TSR is trying to unload it. If any of you have a cool million mildewing in the mattress, dig it out and *Dragon/Ares* can be yours.

But wait. During the past year or so, we saw the emergence of FASA's *Stardate* and Hero's *Adventurers Club*. And recently, two brand-new companies have emerged whose sole purpose (at the moment) is to publish magazines about gaming.

What's going on here? Half the people in the world are clamoring to get out of the magazine business while the rest are falling all over themselves to get into it. Does the half trying to get in know something the half trying to get out doesn't? They'd better; rare indeed is the person who gets rich — or breaks even — in the magazine business. And in the *game* magazine business . . . well, forget it.

So why are all sorts of people getting into the act? In a way, it's really quite simple.

The magazine specialists have a somewhat tougher time of it. Obviously, they have to make money, and they don't have a built-in audience for their products. One newcomer to the field, Diverse Talents, Incorporated of Long Beach, CA, has chosen a relatively simple strategy to combat these problems. First, they've purchased a respected magazine in the field, *Fire & Movement*, from SJ Games. *F&M* is DTI's "pre-sold property." (If SJ Games had just a bit more time and a few more wargamers on staff, we'd probably still be publishing it.) In addition, they've created a new magazine, *The V.I.P. of Gaming*, which they unabashedly describe as "the fast food of game magazines" and the "game manufacturer's friend." I'm not quite sure what that means, but I think they'll find the road ahead filled with potholes (if not land mines). The publishers have stated they'll be trying to solicit submissions from the "amateur end of the writer spectrum" — from Joe Average Gamer. That's about the only thing I've heard that sets *V.I.P.* apart from the rest of the game magazines on the already-crowded market. And that could be the kiss of death. Only time will tell.

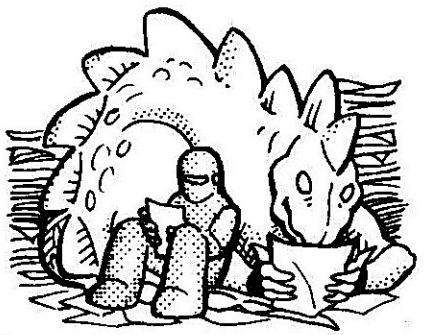
Associates International Incorporated, the other newcomer, has taken a slightly different approach to things. They've brought in some experienced game industry folks — Dana Lombardy, ex-SJ Games marketing director Gerald Swick, Ann Jaffe (who has had a couple of RPG modules published by Mayfair Games). At least as important, they've identified what they believe is an unfilled niche in the game magazine spectrum and they're attempting to fill it with *Game News*. Their corporate motto is "News you can use," and they're going to present that news in the form of lots of brief, colorfully illustrated articles — nothing too in-depth — figuring most gamers would rather game than read. They may be right.

A.I.I. (where did they come up with that name?) has already begun to attract attention from writers and publishers. They're offering as much money for stories as anyone I know of — a not insignificant attraction to the starving freelancers who fill (or should I say *filled?)* the pages of journals like *SG*. In addition, they're embarking upon a major promotional effort which includes mailing 10,000 *free* copies of the first issue of *Game News* to gamers across the country. *(You* could be on their mailing list.) Will the big bucks approach work? No telling until the magazine makes its grand debut. For now, *Game News* (like *The V.I.P. of Gaming)* is something of an enigma.

Now for category number three: Since Chaosium is no longer publishing *Different Worlds*, SJ Games is the lone holdout among game companies trying to publish an independent game magazine. And I hate to be the one to break this to you, but *Space Gamer* doesn't make money. It breaks even. Barely. Sometimes. We work our fingers to the bone, stretch our imaginations to the limit; we run surveys and change this, change that, do more of this, do less of that, run more capsules, drop unpopular features, run a game in every issue, drop games completely; we come up with a new logo, a new look inside and out.

And it just doesn't make any difference at all. *Space Gamer*'s circulation hasn't changed a lick — up *or* down — in years. We are doomed, it seems, to break even. Barely. Sometimes.

Despite it all, we're proud of *Space Gamer*, even if it does seem to be something of a dinosaur. We'll keep plugging away as long as we can. But to be honest, I'm just not sure how long that will be. □



Letters

Address correspondence to *Space Gamer*, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. We prefer letters that are typed and double-spaced. And please give your name and address, okay?

Larry Niven Responds

Thanks for *Space Gamer* #71 and the review of the ***Ringworld*** game.

You've put your finger on an important point. Given the technological power held by the gamers, the challenge within the game ought to be a ferocious one. I have a couple of possibilities in mind . . . and we already know that Chaosium doesn't mind publishing supplements to the game. Maybe I'll make some suggestions.

Best wishes,
Larry Niven
Tarzana, CA

Letter from the Editor

I'd heard all the news and rumor that *Space Gamer* and *Fantasy Gamer* were going to recombine, that *Space Gamer* was going to return to matte (i.e., non-slick) paper and would no longer run adventure scenarios, and so it was with some misgivings that I looked at *SG* #71 when it showed up in my post office box.

Well, I'm reassured. Issue 71 was pretty sharp.

The special Tekumel section was interesting, even to someone (me) who hasn't ever played ***Empire of the Petal Throne***, and I'm glad to see the return of interviews to the pages of *SG*. The articles were a good mix, there were a lot of capsules, and the columns were as interesting as usual.

I'm going to miss the adventures, but the reason for their exclusion — the extraordinary amount of production time each one took up, as I remember very well — makes a lot of sense. The new bimonthly production schedule is disappointing. And I'll be sorry to see Finieous in black-and-white, and will miss Ben Sargent on "Murphy's." But overall, *SG* has weathered its latest metamorphosis in good form, and I'll continue to look forward to seeing it every issue. Good luck.

Aaron Allston
Austin, TX

Coming from a former SG editor, these kind words are doubly appreciated.

—The Editors

Interactive Characterization

Both Charles Platt and Allen Varney underestimate the promise of "interactive fiction" in the articles published in *Space Gamer* 70. Interactive fiction is well-named. It permits the reader/player to make actual choices. Where it is only a puzzle, with a single successful solution and many paths to destruction, the proper comparison is Scott Adams' *Adventure* series. At that level, interactive fiction may be nothing more than an adventure game without graphics.

But these games can branch into many endings where the player/character survives, but with an outcome determined by his actions. Some endings may be more satisfying than others, but that is true of life. In an early computer adventure that I recall, the player was a ship captain faced with several choices (including a life-and-death decision regarding execution of a miscreant seaman). That choice is not comparable to Platt's example of deciding whether to cross the first or second bridge. It requires that characterization be supplied by the player. The cumulative consequence of that and other choices lead to further development of the captain's career.

Sure, it's not great literature. But, properly done, the choices and consequences are logically connected and provide the advantage over novels because the "reader" can exercise some control over the course of action. Of course, the reader isn't fully in control: the options and consequences are externally influenced (by the author). In that respect, interactive fiction is a lot like life. Except that life doesn't have a "save game" option.

Dick Derham
Washington, DC

The Future of Interactive Fiction

Despite Allen Varney's excellent rebuttal to Mr. Platt's editorial in your Jul/Aug 1984 issue of *Space Gamer*, I feel I must note some facts which have been overlooked. I believe the essential problem here is that Mr. Platt mistakes the medium for the message, a point that Mr. Varney did not address.

"Interactive fiction" is not an alternative to novels. As Mr. Platt correctly points out, limitations *of the medium* prohibit in-depth characterizations. Luckily, we don't *have* to choose between novels and interactive fiction, we have both.

Furthermore, interactive fiction is not an art form well-suited to the book format. Despite the increase in recent offerings, the final home of interactive fiction will clearly be the computer — for two reasons. First, the average book does not have enough room to store all the possible variations of a good piece of interactive fiction. The next generation of microcomputers will exceed this limit substantially with new mass-storage devices. Second, a book cannot produce the number of options that a true work of the art would require. The book's choices are necessarily simplistic.

With computers this need not be so. While many current programs do indeed follow much the same convention (even to the limited vocabulary mentioned in the editorial) as interactive fiction books, others, notably ***Zork*** and ***Wizardry***, go further. ***Zork*** and its brethren have huge vocabularies and can parse a large subset of the English sentences that can be constructed with them. ***Wizardry***, though it lacks a large vocabulary, goes one step further into *world simulation.* It is *here* that the future of interactive fiction lies. A true world simulation would enforce no plot whatsoever, but would consist *entirely* of in-depth characterizations. The plot would come from the player's interaction with the world simulated. The current crop of games is but a pale imitation of what I see coming in this realm. Infocom, of ***Zork*** fame, is already experimenting with characters in their adventures which are not enemies or monsters. The next generation of games would expand on this idea to produce a large array of fully-fleshed *people* who would exist only within the "mind" of the computer, *and even the creator/programmer of this microcosm could not predict all the possible permutations of actions within his game.*

I think Mr. Platt's editorial is premature by several years, at least. He is in much the same situation as a man condemning all music after hearing a harmonica. He will not stay around for the full-bodied beauty of the symphony orchestra. I am a programmer, Mr. Platt, and I *know* what computers can do. Give us a few years and you will have to drastically alter your opinion.

And if you want *plot*, well . . . we will *still* have novels.

Lawrence C. Smith, Jr.
Nashua, NH

Advanced Superheroes

Mr. Varney:

Your review of the ***Marvel® Super Heroes Roleplaying Game™*** is correct in all of the points you mentioned. But you neglected one problem with the game: It is the only game of the Marvel universe that will ever exist. TSR® will put all of its efforts into design of new supplements, and never come out with "Advanced" ***MSHRPG™*** rules. This means that the experienced gamer will either have to play the overly simplistic made-for-ten-year-olds-and-first-month-beginners system, or spend a great deal of time and effort transferring the Marvel people into another system. This strikes me as a disservice to the hobby in general. Already five supplements are out, chock full of simple stats and situations and Xerox machine artwork. If "Advanced rules" were on the way, we'd hear about them by now. All in all, ***MSHRPG™*** is a cheap effort aimed at TSR®'s main market: the under-12 set. I still remember when TSR stood for Tactical Studies Rules and feel cheated by this, as a longtime Marvel fan. TSR was put into the position it now holds by experienced gamers introducing the ***D&D®*** game to beginners, and the corporation owes experienced gamers a little more than schlocky rules systems like ***Marvel Super Heroes™***.

Neal Sofge
New York City, NY

P.S. I think you're right about those ™s and ®s, Mr. Varney. Apparently Greg Costikyan thinks so too, from the Designer's Notes of ***Web & Starship***.

Marvel Super Heroes *is obviously intended for youngsters, but I don't think it's "cheap" in any way; it's banal, but it's thoughtfully and intentionally banal. As for "Advanced" rules, who can say? No, they're not planned — but if the game takes off, I'll lay odds we'll soon see* ***Advanced MSH, Expert MSH, Original MSH, The MSH Companion****, et al.*

—AV

Ouch

Just finished with issue #70 and, interestingly enough, found one of my roleplaying mainstays, ***Villains and Vigilantes***, maligned by its absence.

In Allen Varney's review of ***Marvel Super Heroes***, a game which I personally feel is of the same dubious quality as Marvel's *Secret Wars* series, he mentions the one page of "American Government & Law," stating that it supplies more than any other superhero RPG. I find this especially ironic in that William Barton, in his review of ***V&V*** in issue #62, thought that the *three* pages devoted to "laws of the land" were, in his opinion, "one huge waste of space." Try to check a little more carefully next time, Allen. *(Sorry. — AV)*

V&V's other slight was in the "generic" superhero module/adventure. Out of four major roleplaying games (***Champions***, ***Superworld***, ***Marvel Super Heroes***, and ***Villains and Vigilantes***), only the first three were mentioned. While this adventure was obviously adapted from a ***Champions*** adventure, instead of being designed from the start as a generic (note the inclusions of ***Champions*** stats *only*, and the constant reference to VIPER), I would suggest Gregg Sharp check out games other than ***Champions***.

While I may be somewhat prejudiced towards *V&V* and FGU (they have recently printed one of my submissions) *[Battle Above the Earth — AV]*, I wrote a module for them because I like their game best and feel it is the best of the superhero RPGs on the market today. While the "random" character generation system may throw some people off (although nobody complains about random generation of *Top Secret, AD&D, Star Frontiers* characters, etc.), I can only suggest that more people try the game so that *SG* writers will sit up and take more notice of it.

Steve Crow
Iowa City, IA

Superheavy Looks Better

I'd like to do my part to clear up the Great Superheavy Tank Cost Effectiveness Debate. After reading the statement "a pair of HVY TANKs dueling a SUPERHVY will win 60% of the time even if the SUPERHVY fires first" in the *Shockwave* strategy article in *SG* #71, I decided to learn the truth of this question. I sat down for an hour and wrote a short BASIC program to calculate the odds, and these are the figures I got:

Superheavy fires first:	
SuperHVY wins	53.7%
HVY-SuperHVY exchange	20.0%
Heavy tanks win	26.0%
Avg. win for SuperHVY	2.12 VPs
One HVY fires first:	
SuperHVY wins	19.7%
HVY-SuperHVY exchange	7.3%
Heavy tanks win	72.5%
Avg. win for Heavys	6.77 VPs
Both HVYs fire first:	
SuperHVY wins	7.2%
HVY-SuperHVY exchange	2.7%
Heavy tanks win	89.9%
Avg. win for Heavys	10.09 VPs

These figures are rounded to the nearest tenth percent. Also, the program throws out any possibilities less than 0.005% to avoid infinite loops (i.e., both sides keep throwing No Effects).

Gus Smedstad
(No address given)

Sounds better: I haven't worked out the details. Consider also the SHVY's effectiveness in overruns (immune to anything with strength of 1 or 1.5) and its added toughness vs. other single attacks. The trick is to determine when the SHVY is better — and to use it there and only there. —*Steve Jackson*

Shockwave Variant

I bought a copy of *Shockwave* recently. A great game gets even better. Mamazoon's patience has been tried the last couple of weeks by my staying up late finishing scenarios. But on to specific reactions.

The new units are fun, especially the LGEV and Superheavy. But one would think that a Missile Crawler would have at least an AP gun, if not the same weapon as the LGEV and GEV-PC.

Scenarios:

The Day Before — If you really want to see how the *Ogre* map got so devastated, try this scenario on the *G.E.V.* or *Shockwave* map. Tactics do change . . . so does the scenery! If you have a copy of Task Force Games' *War of the Worlds* use the destroyed city hex counters to mark destroyed town and forest hexes. That green map turns quite orange, especially if you assume that D results do not destroy forest hexes, but do *ignite* them. Of course, these observations apply to the *Super CP* scenario as well.

Recon In Force — G.E.V.'s *Breakthrough/Raid* comes of age. A couple of times I've selected two Missile Crawlers among the defenders on the southern map. If even one cruise goes off as planned, odds are the attackers are better off turning tail right then and there. But if both are intercepted, the defense is up the Creek of This. My only criticism of this scenario is that the reinforcement system from *G.E.V.* 9.032 won't get you any of the nifty new units. Entry hex generation works just fine whether you use S-2315, or change it to S-0015. For generating reinforcement units I suggest the following. Roll two dice and read as follows:

2 — Superheavy Tank
3 — 3 squads Marines on GEV-PC
4 — 3 squads infantry
5 — Heavy Tank
6 — 2 Light Tanks, together
7 — Missile Tank
8 — 2 LGEV, together
9 — GEV
10 — 3 squads infantry on GEV-PC
11 — 3 squads Marines
12 — MHWZ

This way, all the new units except Missile Crawlers may enter the game as reinforcements. And with a two-die roll, it is not impossible, though less likely, to receive the larger, costlier units.

In summary, I must state that the advances in this game system published in *Shockwave* are not only their own reward, but also make *The Ogre Book, Vol. II* that much more eagerly awaited. Congratulations, SJG, on another job well done.

Ben V. Kloepper
St. Louis, MO

Sorry to report that The Ogre Book, Volume II has been postponed indefinitely. But look for our special Ogre section next issue!

—*The Editors*

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT!!

Southern California forms...

A NEW *Game Company...*

DTI stands for Diverse Talents, Incorporated, a new California Corporation owned and operated exclusively by Adventure Gamers looking for ways to improve the hobby.

The founders of this young company have united under a far seeing, strong common philosophy that this hobby can gain more public acceptance and obtain substancial future growth by becoming more "social" in its endeavors and reaching out to average people through their very game closets. We are out to: 1) Unite ourselves, the "hard core" Adventure Gamers, and 2) Broaden our size and acceptibility within the general public.

And a NEW *Game Magazine...*

To bring us, the common Adventure Gamers, together there must be first a common need shared, and that would be information. To that end, **DTI's** first endeavor is the founding of **The V.I.P. of Gaming Magazine** (the V.I.P. stands for "Variants, Interviews, and Profiles).

While primarily a varient/review oriented magazine on all aspects of Adventure Gaming by subject (Role-Playing, Wargames, Family Games, Computer games, miniatures, sports games, Play-by-Mail, books, movies, etc.), **The V.I.P. of Gaming** will also provide a forum for your letters as well as provide the history and insights (not to mention the rumors) of the game industry today.

Which needs NEW *Writers (like You)!*

The format for **The V.I.P. of Gaming Magazine** is a "fast food" approach of short variants, clarifications, and tournament rules (of ¼ to 1 page in length), scenarios (½ page or less, if possible), and reviews (brief/capsule style of about 500 words). This slick, professional 48 page magazine needs you, the uncommon gamer to sustain its "shotgun" article approach with your home made variant ideas and intelligent reviewer's opinions on your own, personal favorite game subjects.

Do you have an idea or opinion to share with your fellow Adventure Gamers? If so, then together we can all help each other directly through the contributions of each individual. Please, help improve your hobby by contributing to it! Write for **The V.I.P. of Gaming Magazine!**

For questions, comments or more information, DTI and THE V.I.P. OF GAMING Magazine can be contacted at: P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808.

ILLUMINATI®

The Fast, Exciting, New PBM Game Of Intrigue And Strategic Conflict

Now you can become the absolute master of one of Earth's most powerful secret organizations. Your agents eagerly await your orders. Your mission is nothing less than **Total World Domination!**

JOIN THE PBM CONSPIRACY

- ▲ Twenty-four players per game
- ▲ Full diplomacy — make and break alliances
- ▲ Send messages through the computer
- ▲ Every player's position is different
- ▲ Every player has a unique secret power

- ▲ Clear rules with excellent examples
- ▲ Simple, easy-to-complete turnsheet
- ▲ Detailed reports on all results, in English
- ▲ No turn deadline, no missed turns
- ▲ 24-hour turnaround guaranteed

- ▲ Completely computer-moderated
- ▲ Professional management
- ▲ Over 4,000 turns processed
- ▲ $15 (U.S.) for setup, rulebook, and 3 free turns
- ▲ Only $4 (U.S.) per turn — never an extra charge

"Great rules, great action, just an incredibly great game!" —Jeff Ferris

"HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!" —Gaming Universal

For information, write to:

Adventure Systems
1669 S. Voss, Suite FF-F
Houston, TX 77057

ILLUMINATI [illegible] ILLUMINATI The Play By Mail Conspiracy [illegible] ILLUMINATI [illegible]

I.C.E.'s Mid

How many times have you played or gamemastered a fantasy roleplaying game and been reminded of the grand master of fantasy, J.R.R. Tolkien? Nearly every FRPG features echoes of Tolkien's worlds, and with good reason: What roleplayer hasn't at some point wished he or she could take up the One Ring and face the mighty legions of the Dark Lord at the side of Frodo, Aragorn, or Gandalf?

It was probably inevitable that, sooner or later, some game company would obtain the official blessing of Tolkien Enterprises and produce an FRPG *directly* — rather than indirectly — based on *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Just about three years ago, one did — not one of the gaming industry's giants, but a smaller, more flexible company, able to devote sufficient time and energy to the project. Iron Crown Enterprises (publishers of such competent fantasy works as ***The Iron Wind*** and the ***Rolemaster*** roleplaying system) has brought Middle-earth to roleplayers in all its glory. The ***Middle-earth Role Playing*** system is a viable FRPG, rather than the disaster such a venture could have been in less caring hands.

To date, some 15 items have been released in I.C.E.'s Middle-earth line — one roleplaying game, eight campaign modules, four adventure modules, and two boardgames. It would be impossible to cover all of these items in one article, so what follows must serve as an introduction to the basic roleplaying system. (For a look at the supplementary material offered, see the accompanying Buyer's Guide.)

The Middle-earth Role Playing System

Middle-earth Role Playing comes in two formats. A boxed edition, selling for $12, includes a 104-page rulebook, a 16-page booklet of map displays, a 3½" x 8½" cardstock sheet of cut-out character counters, two 20-sided dice, and an errata sheet; the rulebook is available separately for $8. Game design is attributed primarily to S. Coleman Charlton, though several others are listed as contributors.

Middle-earth Role Playing (or ***MERP***) is not actually a *new* system. It is, in fact, a compilation and simplification of the various components of I.C.E.'s ***Rolemaster*** series — ***Arms Law, Spell Law, Claw Law,*** and ***Character Law*** — adapted for use in the context of Middle-earth. For a complete discussion of ***MERP***'s mechanics, see the ***Rolemaster*** review in *Fantasy Gamer* #1. The only essential difference is that ***MERP*** provides the world background sorely lacking in ***Rolemaster***. In addition, ***MERP*** provides long lists of the various races and creatures of Middle-earth, with physical descriptions, cultural notes, and gaming stats.

Problems

Missing from the ***MERP*** rules is any in-depth description of the history or geography of Middle-earth, though the sample adventure in the rulebook provides at least a small section of the land in which to start a campaign — the Trollshaws. The lack of detailed background in ***MERP*** is really no more serious than in games like ***D&D***, ***T&T***, and ***TFT***. And Tolkien's world is sufficiently well-known to gamers that the background info that *is* provided should do the job. For those who need more, in-depth data can be found in the various campaign modules.

MERP has some other problems as well: The rules could have been better organized, for one thing. Character generation is first mentioned on page 6, for example, and picks up again on page 28; a table (BT-1) mentioned on page 6 doesn't appear until page 29 — *after* tables BT-2 through 4; creature descriptions begin on page 39, but game stats don't appear until page 88; and so on. It's not really confusing, just a bit annoying at times to have to jump so many pages for related data.

I wonder, also, about the appropriateness of some of the ***Rolemaster*** mechanics in the Middle-earth context — the spells in particular. Is this an accurate portrayal of magic in Tolkien's realm? Of course, the laws of magic were never spelled out (no pun intended) in *Lord of the Rings*, and the ***MERP*** magic system works adequately, so this isn't a major stumbling block.

Character advancement *can* be a problem, however. ***MERP*** allows advancement only to 10th level. ***Rolemaster*** is necessary if a campaign eventually rises to levels beyond that — which it will have to, if players want to play in the same league as Gandalf, Aragorn, Elrond, and other figures from Tolkien. Still, until that point in a campaign is reached — and for play groups who wish only to play isolated scenarios in Middle-earth — ***MERP*** should prove more than sufficient. And even though ***MERP*** is a simplified version of ***Rolemaster***, potential purchasers should be warned that it is still fairly complex as FRPGs go. Beginning roleplayers should start off with a simpler system — ***T&T, TFT***, or even basic ***D&D*** — before tackling ***MERP***. Experienced gamers should have no problem.

A few words of warning: If you already own ***Rolemaster***, you don't need ***MERP*** at all — unless you want to see exactly how the I.C.E. system fits into Tolkien's world. If that is your interest, just get the $8 rulebook. The extra components of the boxed edition are nice, but not really necessary — the map displays appear in reduced form in the rulebook, and the counters can be replaced by miniatures. If you're thinking of buying ***Rolemaster*** but haven't yet, pick up ***MERP*** instead. It's easier to follow *and* less expensive; if you work through it, you can go for ***Rolemaster*** later.

The Last Word

I don't keep up much any more with straight fantasy roleplaying system, concentrating instead on SF, modern, and supernatural RPGs. The I.C.E. Middle-earth line is one I do intend to follow as long as the modules continue to exhibit the high quality I.C.E. has maintained so far. I expect this will be until the last corner of Middle-earth has been documented for roleplaying enjoyment. If you haven't yet taken a trip to Middle-earth via the Iron Crown, I recommend you remedy the situation as soon as possible. □

dle-earth Modules

William A. Barton

Where to Go in Middle-earth: A Buyer's Guide

*Here's a brief overview of the modules and adventures supporting Iron Crown Enterprises' **Middle-earth Role Playing** system. Though not intended as reviews — even capsule reviews — these descriptions and comments may help guide you into Tolkien's world. **Space Gamer** would like capsule reviews of the Middle-earth products we haven't already covered.*

—The Editors

Campaign Modules

I.C.E.'s ***MERP*** campaign modules offer broad overviews of large areas of Middle-earth, with notes on major inhabitants, races, creatures, flora, fauna, geography, climate, etc. Charts found in the back of the modules provide game stats on important NPCs, military forces, beasts, herbs and poisons, and so on. Guidelines for running campaigns in various eras of Middle-earth, from the First through Fourth Ages, also appear, along with other notes for the gamemaster. Each module has a glossary of terms to aid those unfamiliar with (or rusty on) Tolkien's mythos.

Also featured are guidelines on converting the modules to other fantasy RPG systems. This would appear to be ideal for those who want to run Middle-earth campaigns using their own fantasy systems, instead of switching to ***MERP/Rolemaster***. And for those who don't mind a great deal of work, it can be accomplished. However, since so *much* of the data is in ***MERP/RM*** terms, it would be easier in the long run to switch to ***MERP*** as a system rather than trying to twist the values given into a different — and probably incompatible — system.

One minor complaint I have is the size of type used throughout these modules, which ranges from small to microscopic; this tends to cause eyestrain after a while. Still, for the price — $10.00 each, except where noted — and the amount of data packed into these modules, a little eyestrain isn't a great price to pay.

Guidebook to Middle-earth: 16-page book and 24" x 36" poster map of Middle Earth; designed by Peter C. Fenlon and Terry K. Amthor; $9. An overall — but brief — guide to gaming in Middle-earth, with notes on inhabitants, lands, integrating Middle-earth into an existing fantasy campaign, and using the map. Mainly notable for the map, which is beautiful. Otherwise of little real use.

Angmar: Land of the Witch King: 48-page book and 16" x 20" pullout map of Northern Misty Mountains backed by map of city of Carn Dum; designed by Heike Kubasch. Describes the northern land of Angmar, its geography, flora, structures and inhabitants, including the Witch King, later leader of the Nazgul. (Reviewed in *SG* #61.)

Umbar: Haven of the Corsairs: 52-page book and 16" x 20" pullout map of Umbar Bay region backed with map of city of Umbar; designed by Brenda Gates Spielman. Describes Umbar, the city of the corsairs allied with Sauron, along the coast some distance south of Gondor. Also includes the city's lords, inhabitants, structures, etc. (Reviewed in *SG* #61. See also the Designer's Notes accompanying this section.)

The Court of Ardor in Southern Middle-earth: 52-page book with 12" x 20" pullout map of Ardor (Mumakan) region backed with city map; designed by Terry K. Amthor. Describes the region of Mumakan far to the south of the lands of Middle-earth of *Lord of the Rings*, across the Haradwaith desert. Includes the evil council known as the Court of Ardor. The module includes descriptions and game stats on the various members of the Court of Ardor, plans of citadels, holds and other structures, and general notes on the region. It is notable in covering an area that is completely removed from those in which *LOTR* is set, allowing GMs and players the greatest freedom of action without fear of changing the history of Middle-earth as outlined in *LOTR*. A lot of original material here. (Reviewed in *Fantasy Gamer* #6.)

Northern Mirkwood: The Wood-Elves Realm: 52-page book and 12" x 20" map of Northern Mirkwood backed with city maps of Dale and others from *The Hobbit;* designed by John David Ruemmler and Peter C. Fenlon. This module covers the areas explored in *The Hobbit*, from the northern expanses of Mirkwood to the Long Lake and Lonely Mountain. Excellent for a play group wishing to retrace Bilbo's steps through the great forest and beyond. (See capsule review accompanying this section.)

Southern Mirkwood: Haunt of the Necromancer: 60-page book and 16" x 20" map of Southern Rhovanion backed with maps of a Woodman town, a Horse-lord settlement, and Dol Gildur; designed by Susan Tyler Hitchcock and Peter C. Fenlon; $12. The Southern Mirkwood campaign module concentrates on Dol Gildur, the lair of Sauron in his guise as the Necromancer. It includes extensive plans of the Dol Gildur citadel, along with gaming stats for Sauron, the Mouth of Sauron, and even Radagast the Brown. Other inhabitants and creatures are also covered, including the woodmen, forest elves, and the Northmen. A module for characters powerful and brave (or foolhardy) enough to challenge the Dark Lord in one of his lairs.

NORTHERN MIRKWOOD (Iron Crown Enterprises); $10. Designed by John Ruemmler and Peter Fenlon. 52-page book, 17" x 22" map. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Northern Mirkwood is a guide to the area of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth that is north of the dwarf highway and east of the Misty Mountains. The book painstakingly profiles the geography, history, major flora and fauna, and inhabitants of the entire region. Readers of *The Hobbit* will recognize the area instantly, once they see the Lonely Mountain. The authors take the information from *The Hobbit* and expand it marvelously, down to essays on the politics of the region. Diagrams and plans of the major strongpoints in the area (the Elvenking's halls, the interior of the Lonely Mountain, a pair of orc-holds, and an evil monastery) are included. Only suggestions for adventures are given; ***Northern Mirkwood*** is more reference material than module — even extending to complete statistics for the beings adventurers are likely to meet, and a list of enchanted items (mostly herbs). ***Northern Mirkwood*** is one of the few game supplements that features a list of selected reading materials to be studied by the dedicated gamemaster.

Northern Mirkwood is excellent; the background material on economics and history is priceless to a Tolkien aficionado. The map is beautiful, and meant to combine with the maps from other I.C.E. Middle-earth materials (the complete map must be gigantic).

The stats are given in the I.C.E. ***Rolemaster*** system, and though conversion tables are given in the front of the book, the stats never quite fit any system but ***Rolemaster***.

If you want a Tolkien-esque campaign, then ***Northern Mirkwood*** is an invaluable treatise. Unfortunately, for the $10 it costs, you could get another Tolkien book.

—Craig Sheeley

Isengard and Northern Gondor: 48-page book and 16" x 20" pullout map of Northern Gondor backed with plans of Orthanc; designed by Christian Gehman and Terry K. Amthor. Saruman and his tower of Orthanc at Isengard are the focus of this campaign module covering the grassy plains of Calenardhon (later Rohan) in Northern Gondor. Descriptions and game stats are included for the White Wizard, along with stats for Grima Wormtongue, notes on the Palantiri, descriptions of the inhabitants such as the Dunlendings and Woses, and plans of the fortress of Hornburg. Since the southern tip of Fangorn forest appears on the map, stats for Ents and Huorns are also provided.

Moria: The Dwarven City: 72-page book; designed by Peter C. Fenlon. *Moria* departs somewhat from the format of previous campaign modules in that it focuses on a limited area rather than a large section of Middle-earth. Instead of a pullout center map, color maps of Moria and its environs, a cross-section of Moria, and maps of its gates appear on the inside front and back covers. The module outlines the history of Moria and the dwarves who built it, includes extensive interior maps and descriptions of Moria's mines and passages, and details some of its other inhabitants — including the dreaded Balrog. Several brief adventure suggestions are provided as well.

Adventure Modules

The title "Adventure Modules" may be a bit misleading for these items, as they are very similar to the Campaign Modules, differing only in length and focus. They cover smaller areas than the campaign modules, but examine the same aspects of the regions as do the larger modules — history, inhabitants, geography, etc. They do this just as competently as the campaign modules, but on a smaller scale. The Adventure Modules, as the name implies, include more detailed adventure guidelines than the Campaign Modules.

Most of the adventures in these modules seem to be designed for characters of third to fifth levels or higher — a potential problem. There seem to be few adventures designed for beginning characters. Unless you want to do some adjusting for balance, or include a few higher level NPCs with the adventuring party, you will be unable to use these adventures until you've run the players through a few of your own to raise their levels. Perhaps future adventure modules will include adventures more suitable for first-level characters (with notes for use with higher level parties). In the meantime, these modules are ideal for multi-session play for characters of the proper levels.

Bree and the Barrow-Downs: 34-page book; designed by Heike Kubasch. As can be guessed from its name, this adventure module describes the town of Bree and the nearby Barrow-downs, site of some of the early actions in *LOTR*. It provides a history of Bree, its inhabitants, and its culture. Also included are layouts of the various barrows and their contents, descriptions of the wights that haunt them, and charts of healing herbs, NPCs, and wild beasts. Maps of Bree and the Barrow area appear on the inside front and back covers and facing pages. Several adventure outlines are provided for use in setting scenarios in the Bree area.

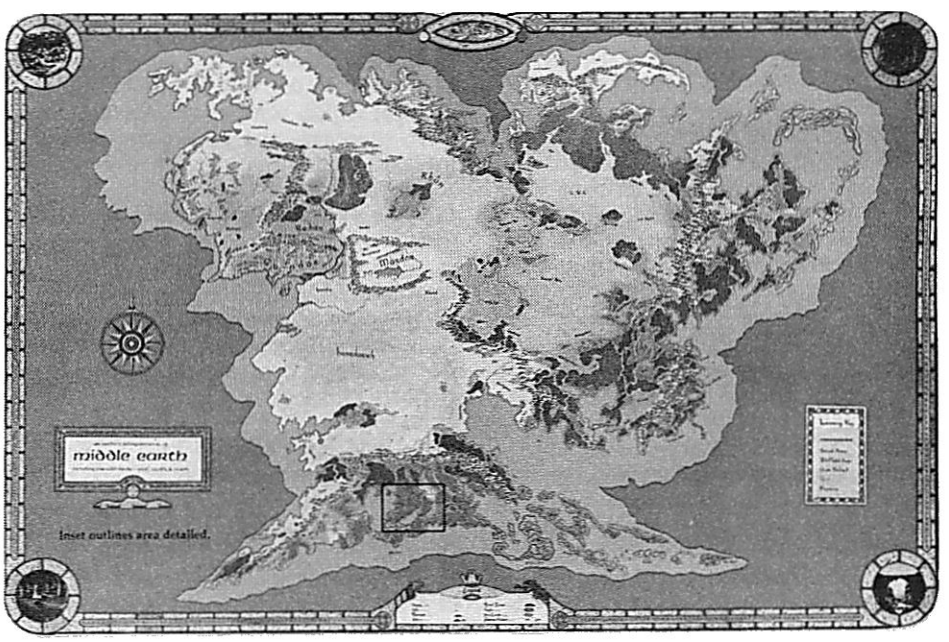
Dagorlad and the Dead Marshes: 36-page book; designed by Ruth Sochard. This adventure module focuses on the plain of Dagorlad, north of Mordor, site of the battle between the Last Alliance of Elves and Men and the forces of Sauron. Like the larger campaign modules, it surveys the history, flora and fauna, creatures (including the undead), and fortresses of the region, providing maps and plans of various structures, along with stats for NPCs. The suggested adventures are extensive in scope and more complete than those of ***Bree.*** Good for a party of adventurers who wish to visit a nasty area (with some safe havens for relaxation between adventures). An area map appears on the inside front cover; city and fortress maps on inside back cover and facing page.

The Tower of Cirith Ungol and Shelob's Lair: 32-page book; designed by Carl Willner. Arachniphobiacs may want to pass this one up, but those who dream of following Samwise's example of sticking it to the giant spider Shelob should find this module of more than passing interest. It features extensive plans of the unclean fortress of Cirith Ungol and surrounding catacombs, including those in which the unwary might encounter the dreaded Shelob. Charts and descriptions list the NPCs of the tower's garrison. And, of course, there are game stats on Shelob herself. Maps on the inside back cover and facing page show the tower of Cirith Ungol and surrounding area; a larger area map on the inside front cover locates Minas Ithil, Minas Tirith, Cirith Gorgor, and other features in and near Mordor. Several suggested adventures provide plenty of play ideas. This is the best of the adventure modules published so far.

Hillmen of the Trollshaws: 36-page book; designed by Jeff McKeage. This module offers adventure in the lands of western Rhudaur. Featured areas include the fortress of Cameth Brin, complete with layouts and descriptions, and adventures range from exploits within that fortress to breaching troll lairs to encounters with the ghosts of the Ta-Fa-Nilch, the Petty-Dwarves. Nearby Rivendell is mentioned, but only briefly. Area and city maps of the Trollshaws region appear on the inside front and back covers. Several extensive adventure possibilities are the main feature of the module. It can be used to extend the sample scenario in *MERP*, as well.

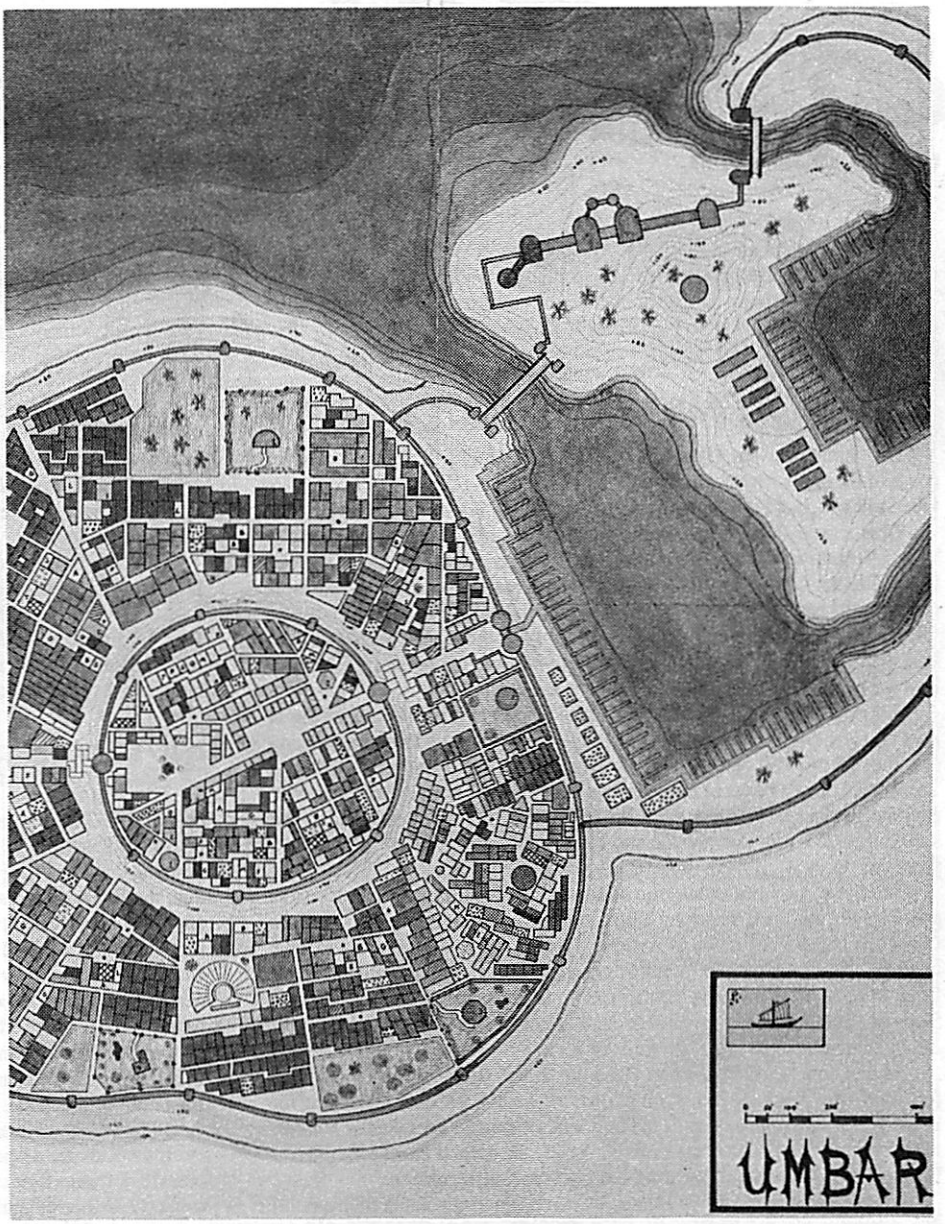
I.C.E. continues to produce journeys to Middle-earth — ***Rangers of the North: The Kingdom of Arthedain*** should be out soon. If future modules carry on in the vein of those already published, the line should have a long run indeed.

—William A. Barton



UMBAR
Designer's Notes

Brenda Gates Spielman



Writing *Umbar* was certainly different from anything I had done before, first because it was based on someone else's world, and second because it was a fantasy roleplaying module rather than a piece of fiction. In fact, a FRP module is very much like the framework I develop for a world before I start writing a novel — except that instead of cryptic notes which only I understand, it has to be written so that someone *else* can understand it too.

With *Umbar*, instead of devising my own world I had to extrapolate a full package from what Tolkien had written about Umbar in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. I searched out every mention of Umbar in those works and compiled a timeline for the history of the city as a basis for my writing. (I did miss one reference that appeared only in a footnote, but it was added last spring when *Umbar* was reprinted.) Peter Fenlon, editor of the Middle-earth series, had given me only two requirements for the package: He specified the year, and heavily emphasized the necessity of being consistent with Tolkien. Since this was one of the first packages, I could write on almost any area, but it was a friend of mine, Ruth Sochard, who suggested Umbar. (What she actually said was that the area I was considering sounded dull, so why didn't I write about Umbar instead?)

• • •

Umbar took more research than anything I had written up to that time. First, I had to be consistent with Tolkien. Nothing that was incompatible with Tolkien, or which contradicted anything that he had written about Umbar, would be permitted, and we also wished to include *everything* that he had written about the city. Also, I wanted Umbar to look like a real city. I spent May in the library of the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia researching castles, medieval cities, and medieval villages.

I also put in a lot of time trying to develop "Tolkien-sounding" names for the characters. I analyzed a list of Numenorean names and broke them down into a list or recurring syllables which I used to construct the names of the Captains of the city.

Designing the city layout was one of the more enjoyable parts of the project, and I was quite pleased at the way it looked, with its typical medieval "starfish"-shaped clustering of houses and narrow streets. At least, I was pleased until Terry Amthor (who did the final city drawing) pointed out that I had forgotten the *docks*, but that he had put them in. He also added an amphitheater and other neat things — with, I hasten to add, my approval. One of the minor pleasures of *Umbar* was that my castle and tower layouts were drawn as I had designed them.

A few days after the dock incident, Coleman Charlton straightened me out about how much a 6'10" man should weigh; otherwise my Lords would all have been very skinny.

I decided on an oligarchy as a government form because it seemed likely for a "pirate" city. I had a lot of fun designing towers and castles for each of the six oligarchs, but it was less fun (much, *much* less fun) describing the towers and castles room by room. In fact, at one point I definitely wished that I had decided on only four oligarchs — but I was too fond of the ones I had made up to throw two of them away, and I simply would not consider throwing away any of the towers. So I kept describing rooms instead.

Writing in someone else's world can be restrictive, but I thoroughly enjoyed writing a module in Middle-earth. I have loved the realm since I discovered *The Lord of the Rings* in 1967. It was not that difficult to write in Tolkien's Middle-earth because I have re-read his books so many times that I have a very clear mental image of the land. For me, writing *Umbar* was no more difficult than writing a story that takes place in a real city, or in another historical period — both of which place constraints on the author. I did enjoy writing about Middle-earth, and I would do it again — in fact, I just did: I recently gave Peter Fenlon the complete package for ***Amarthost, Fortress of Doom***. Of course, they won't call it that; they always change my titles. □

STRATEGY IN GLOBBO!

BY PHILIP RENNERT

GLOBBO, introduced in the April (Fools?) 1983 issue of *Space Gamer* and recently re-released, is an unabashedly weird little game. The idea of writing an article about strategy in it may seem even more insane, but here goes! (If you haven't seen the game, expect to find some strange sentences here.)

GLOBBO Strategy: Run Away and REGENERATE!

That sums up what Globbo should try to do in the first, and decisive, phase of the game. Every turn Globbo can avoid taking damage he becomes a little stronger; build up those regeneration points!

What should Globbo spend his points on, you ask? The answer: Heads! Why? Because each new Head produces new regeneration points. In four turns, Globbo can have two Heads. In eight turns, four. (***Stellar Conquest*** players will recognize the "General Motors strategy.") In twelve turns, Globbo can have eight Heads, but there are only four in the countermix, and that's generally enough to win with. Also, Heads carry Globbo's best weapon. (Burp. I mean Globbo, not me.)

Globbo should avoid combat with Biters whenever possible until he has at least two Heads, preferably four. The only exception is the defensive Burping of a Biter who would otherwise be close enough to take a chomp at the Head. This should be at a range of three or four hexes (I hope none of you have tried Burping at ranges less than three hexes, at least not more than once) and should include a Zap to make the attack a sure thing. Stay clear of the fission products!

Otherwise, Globbos should run as fast as possible from as many Biters as possible, buying time, exposing Slaps instead of Zaps to the Biters' attacks (Slaps are cheaper) as much as possible. During this phase Globbo will have to leave behind any parts of him that get chomped off, so he should keep his limbs in tight, as in his initial configuration. Globbo should never attack with Slaps or Zaps during this phase: He can't afford to lose limbs, since he's trying to stretch them to last eight turns at least.

When Globbo gets his second Head, he should send it off away from the first, and away from the Biters, on its own (no limbs); it should be looking for Blips or Yeasts to Burp. This is the best kind of combat for Globbo: He kills Kids for keeps and doesn't take losses. Again, the second Head may have to Burp a Biter defensively, but it should also run and regenerate.

When Globbo gets to four Heads, he can begin to go on the offensive. If things get this far, the Kids are in a lot of trouble. What Globbo should do, other than Burping free Blips and Yeasts wherever they can be found, is to Burp one Biter and then concentrate three or more Heads to Burp his fission products before they can recombine. Globbo should avoid Burping two or three Biters which are near each other, since he may find himself looking at three or four Biters the next turn, plus some change. On turn ten, Globbo should equip each lonely free Head with a Zap, both to make mid-range Burps a sure thing instead of a 5/6 chance, and to pick up unescorted Yeasts (or Yeasts that become unescorted after the Burping).

To prevent this, the Kids can guard Yeasts with Blips, and Blips with Biters, until they can recombine. Globbo does not want to Burp a Biter escorting two Blips; he'll get two Biters next turn. Unless three Heads can be concentrated, to Burp the Blips after the Biter, Globbo should just run away. If the guardian Biter stays with the Blips and pursues at only two hexes/turn, he'll be left behind, out of the battle. He'll have to leave the Blips, exposing them to long-range Burps.

On turn eleven, Globbo can start to buy Slaps for his new Heads; then he can begin to think about attacking with Slaps. He wants to put three Slaps into the blast radius of a Biter; then at the cost of only three regeneration points, there won't be enough left of the Biter to recombine. Globbo can do this by getting three Slaps adjacent to a Biter (probably from two different Heads), or by having them two hexes away, and have a third Head loose a killing Burp from long range.

At all times, Globbo must avoid letting Biters get chomps at his Heads. It is necessary to count the four hexes of each Biter, to make sure they can't get adjacent. If Globbo plans to attack with Zaps or Slaps, he must remember that some of his limbs won't be there when the Biters move, and account for that in his counting. Remember the wraparound board, both in counting Biter attacks and in planning sneaky long-range Burps.

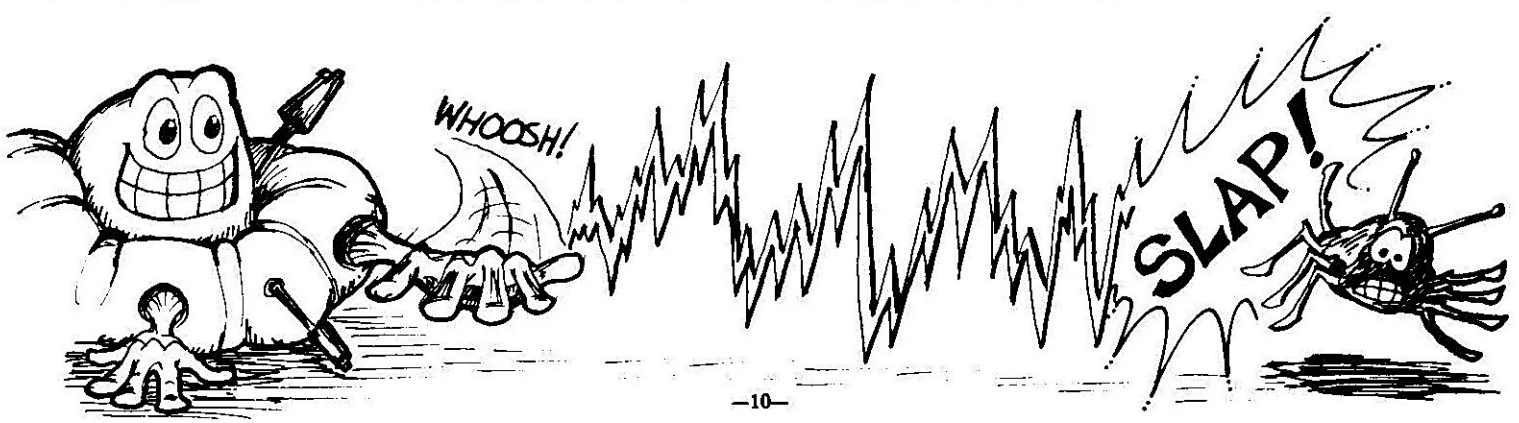
KID Strategy: Stay Together and CHARGE!

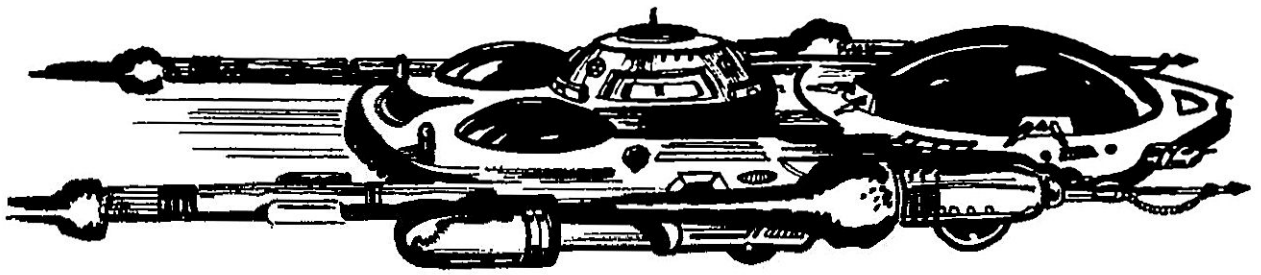
The Kids must win early if they are to win at all. They must chomp away enough of Globbo's limbs to make him expend his hoarded regeneration points on replacing them. A good Kid setup is to enclose Globbo in a hexagon (then he can't run away from all of them: he must run toward some); after that, the Biters should stay together, so they can mutually recombine, and go after Globbo as fast as they can. If any Blips occur beyond the three needed to recombine, they should attack Globbo only if they can get a shot at a Zap (1/3 chance of getting it, worth 2 regeneration points), and of course they can't attack Heads. Kids should attack Zaps whenever they can, especially if they have a chance to cut off some of Globbo's limbs. Since Globbo is on the run, he'll have to leave them behind. Free Blips and Yeasts should be protected by Biters if there's a danger of long-range Burping, but not at the cost of leaving Biters out of the battle. Since it's blitz or nothing for the Kids, they must let the Blips take their chances.

If the Kids are desperate, they may consider sending Biters through warpholes, if it means they can get a shot at the Head. This generally comes down to a 1/12 chance of getting the Head (maybe winning the game), a 1/6 chance of losing the Biter, and a 1/3-1/2 chance of landing the Biter somewhere out of the action. If a lone Blip is caught far from any Yeast, it may be a good idea to send him warp-holing: Waiting four or five turns for him to walk (sorry, float) to the Yeast is almost as bad as losing him to the warp-hole.

If Globbo generates a second Head with no limbs, the Kids may want to go for it instead, since there are no limbs to get in their way. However, Globbo will probably generate it as far from them as possible. The Kids shouldn't split up into groups smaller than two Biters (three would be better); pick one Head and send everything after it.

What else can I say? Happy Globbing! □





STARSHIP Piloting

in *Champions/Danger International*

by S. Bowne and P. Woods

"He had read of 'space' . . . of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, [but] he could not call it dead; . . . since out of this ocean the worlds and all their life had come . . ."
C.S. Lewis

Like worlds, space is teeming with life and adventures. Why miss out on the new discoveries by having players "just get there"? Neither ***Champions*** nor ***Danger International*** has a space travel system, so we propose the following rule additions.

Starship Piloting

To pilot a ship, players must buy **Starship Piloting**, a Transport Skill. This skill enables a character to land on planets and take off, and to use warp drive to go faster than light. Under normal situations, landing and taking off do not require a skill roll, but warp travel *always* involves a skill roll (explained below). Cost: 2 points, +1 to roll for each +1 point.

Players who begin with no experience in Starship Piloting (such as spies from modern-day earth) cannot buy skill levels until they have piloted at least a dozen times.

Warp Space

Before the discovery of warp space, ships were forced to travel slower than light, and trips to other star systems were nearly impossible. With a warp drive, a ship can go much faster than light, but there are new problems in navigation. Warp space is very different from normal space: There are no stars or planets, and while ships are in warp space only a grey formless mist can be seen outside the ship. Two points only a hundred million miles apart in warp space (much less than a light-year) may be light-years apart in normal space. By jumping into warp space, travelling through it, and returning to normal space, interstellar travel is possible. The relationship between warp space and normal space is complicated, and a large computer is strongly suggested for navigation. Good computers are available in advanced societies, but they are never completely reliable, because warp space has "currents" and "eddies" which may move a ship off course. Ships which go faster take a larger chance of being dragged off course, because the only way to go faster is to go through more unstable parts of warp space.

Mapped and Unmapped Space

All spaceships have starmaps — computerized records of routes between stars. On starmaps, routes are marked with a "recommended time" number. A normal pilot can make a mapped trip in the recommended time on a roll of 16 or less. Most mapped trips are 30–100 light-years long, and take 1–3 weeks (recommended time). Occasionally, players may venture into unmapped space, either through a spirit of adventure or because they went off course. Unmapped space is more dangerous, and a typical "recommended time" is one day per light-year. Both in mapped and unmapped space, pilots may go faster, but they take −1 to their roll for each 2x speed. Characters frequently make hurried trips, so we made the accompanying chart for a trip with a recommended time of one week. For a longer trip with a recommended time of two weeks, multiply all the times in the chart by two. (For example, a two-week trip could be completed in four days with a roll of 14 or less). For a very long trip, with a recommended time of three weeks, multiply the listed times by three. Few commercial routes involve hyperspace jumps longer than three weeks.

Speed Chart (for a one-week trip)

Time For Trip	Pilot's Base Roll
2 weeks	17 or less
1 week	16 or less
4 days	15 or less
2 days	14 or less
1 day	13 or less
12 hours	12 or less
6 hours	11 or less
3 hours	10 or less
90 minutes	9 or less
45 minutes	8 or less
20 minutes	7 or less
10 minutes	6 or less
5 minutes	5 or less
2 minutes	4 or less

A roll of 18 always fails, regardless of Skill Levels or other modifiers.

Getting Lost

Pilots must declare speeds before entering warp space, and then attempt their skill rolls. Characters on the ship cannot tell if they are on course until the ship returns to normal space. If the pilot fails the roll, roll again on the "Lost in Space" chart.

Lost in Space

Roll	Effect
8 or less	2 d6 light-years off course
9-11	4d6 light-years off course
12-14	10 x 1d6 light-years off course
15-17	Lost in same galaxy
18	Out of galaxy

High rolls can lead to a delay in the original adventure, as the players try to find some way home. Once out of the galaxy, only 3 points of Luck, aliens with faster ships, or a prolonged series of adventures can get you home, since galaxies are typically 200,000 light-years apart.

Warp space is connected to this space by gravity, so if players roll an 18, they will always appear within 30 light-years of some star or other heavy object, not stranded in empty space. Players who are lost in space may discover alien races, ancient artifacts, or portals into other times and dimensions. Anything is possible.

Other situations can affect the likelihood of getting lost. Use this chart to get some ideas:

Modifiers for warp space travel

Situation	Effect
Unfamiliar ship	−2
Ship is damaged	−1 to −4
Malfunctioning computer	−1 to −7
No computer	−8
In combat	−2
Close to a planet or star	−2
2 or more pilots together	Bonuses as for Complementary Skills

These modifiers apply to the pilot's skill roll, and also to the Lost in Space roll if he or she fails.

If the warp drive is turned off before a ship arrives at its destination, the pilot must make a new roll at −2 to resume FTL travel. For this reason, merchants and military ships never leave warp space prematurely for any reason other than engine failure.

The Pilot in Play

Michael Swifte, daring adventurer, is taking off from Theris without paying his fees. Since the port authorities are trying to shoot him down, he decides to warp jump to Earth, which is normally a 1-week trip. He decides to go at normal speed, which will mean a week in warp space. Normally, he would have a 16 or less roll to succeed, but he's under fire and close to a planet, so he takes −4 to his roll. He must roll 12 or less to succeed. Rolling a 14, he fails, and must roll on the Lost in Space chart. His next roll is a 10, which becomes a 14 because of the modifiers. When he emerges a week later from warp space, he is 10 x 1d6 light-years off course, in unmapped space. Rolling a 6, he's 60 light-years off course, which will take 60 days to correct at the recommended speed. He decides to go at 4 times the recommended speed, which gives him −2 to his roll, so he must roll 14 or less to stay on course. He rolls a 9, and will arrive in the solar system in 15 days.

Special Effects of Warp Travel

In warp space, viewports will show a grey, faintly glowing mist at a great distance. All matter, including ships and passengers, becomes translucent in warp space, so privacy is minimal. There are rumors of places where stars and planets exist in warp space, and even of intelligent beings which live there, but few people have seen them. Of course, many ships have warped out, never to return, and who can know their fate? □

those WIZARDS' REALM™ folk have moved!

...but we know where they are!

. . . and that means we can still find their special WIZARD'S RINGBINDER™ set — including WIZARDS'REALM gamebook complete with maps, playaids & introductory adventure WR GrapHex mapping sheets WR Character Records pad Gamescience High Impact® GEM™ dice — plus a pack of CARDBOARD HEROES® by Steve Jackson Games — all together in their unique poly binder. Still just $20.

Next move?

© Mystic Swamp

Mystic Swamp

"THE WIZARDS' REALM™ FOLK"

P. O. Box 740187
New Orleans, LA
70174-0187

HIGH IMPACT and GEM are trademarks of Gamescience, and used by permission.
CARDBOARD HEROES are trademark of Steve Jackson Games, and used by permission.

Pre-enlistment Skills in *TRAVELLER*

by Warren Okuma

Recently, it occurred to me that starting characters in ***Traveller*** were 18 years old and had absolutely no skills. What ever happened to computer whiz kids? How about members of the rifle team and the R.O.T.C. — they could reasonably be expected to have Rifle-1. And just imagine a war-torn country (or planet) with few adults left alive; such a country might send twelve-year-old kids into battle. How many skills would kids growing up in this country have upon reaching 18? This article offers some guidelines for creating characters 18 and younger and generating appropriate skills for them.

Building a Character

First, players must decide how old their characters are. Younger characters will have lower starting characteristics than standard ***Traveller*** characters. Use the following chart to determine how many dice to roll for your character's basic characteristics:

17-18 years old:	2d6
15-16 years old:	2d6 − 1
14 years old:	1d6 + 2

Any character under 14 should begin with further reductions in Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, and Education.

Skills

The standard enlistment procedures don't work very well for the under-19 crowd. Younger characters should select skills using a different system. To find out how many skills you can take, use this formula:

(Education + Intelligence)/4 = Skill Points

Any fraction of .5 or more can be used to buy an extra skill at level 0. (The character gets no plus *or* minus when using that skill.)

EXAMPLE: Mickey is a youngster with an IQ of 6 and an Education of 7. This gives him (6 + 7)/4 skill points — a total of 3.25. Rounded down, this means he will be able to select 3 skills. (If his IQ had been 7, his skill point total would have been 3.5 — (7 + 7)/4. Had this been the case, he would have been able to select three skills plus one at level 0.)

In determining which skills young characters have, use the Skill Tables provided with this article. Characters roll on the skill table a number of times equal to their starting skill point total. The basic skill categories are Personal Development, Street Skills, School Skills, Rural Skills, Special Interests, and War Zone Skills. Feel free to change these categories (and the specific skills within them) to fit the needs of your campaign and your players. Remember that only characters who have grown up in a war zone may select war zone skills. Remember also that growing up in a war zone has an adverse effect on material and cash benefit rolls.

SKILL SELECTION EXAMPLE: Mickey has three skill rolls and chooses to roll twice on the Special Interests table and once on the Rural Skills table. His rolls are a 3, a 6, and a 2, giving him Mechanical, Gambling, and Bow Combat.

In addition to the unique skill tables, younger characters should use the Cash and Material Benefits chart included with this article. Characters between the ages of 16 and 18 roll twice on this table; all other characters roll once. Players are free to choose which chart they roll on.

This character generation system allows characters to make use of their education characteristic; it can be used to give an upset 1-term character a few extra skills; or it can be used to put together a team of precocious kid commandos. Most characters generated using this system are exceptional and should be played as such.

The system suggests several interesting scenario ideas: Let's say a 14-year-old runs away from home; he's a nasty kid who packs a shotgun. A bunch of kids his own age would be able to go a lot more places this kid is likely to go — without attracting a lot of attention — than a crew of 45-year-old cutthroats. And how about the problems encountered by younger characters? Where and how would they get gun permits? Where would they find a patron? (Probably not in a bar . . . at least not without getting into some trouble.) Sometimes just getting a job can be an adventure in itself.

Running an adventure with an all-under-19 gang can be a real challenge, but with the application of a little imagination, you can have all sorts of fun with gifted midget commandos. □

BENEFITS

	Cash Allowances	Material Benefits
1 or less	20 Cr	Blade
2	50 Cr	+1 Dex
3	100 Cr	Gun
4	250 Cr	Cloth Armor
5	500 Cr	Ground Car
6	1000 Cr	Low Psg
7	2000 Cr	Med Psg
8	3000 Cr	High Psg

SKILL SELECTION

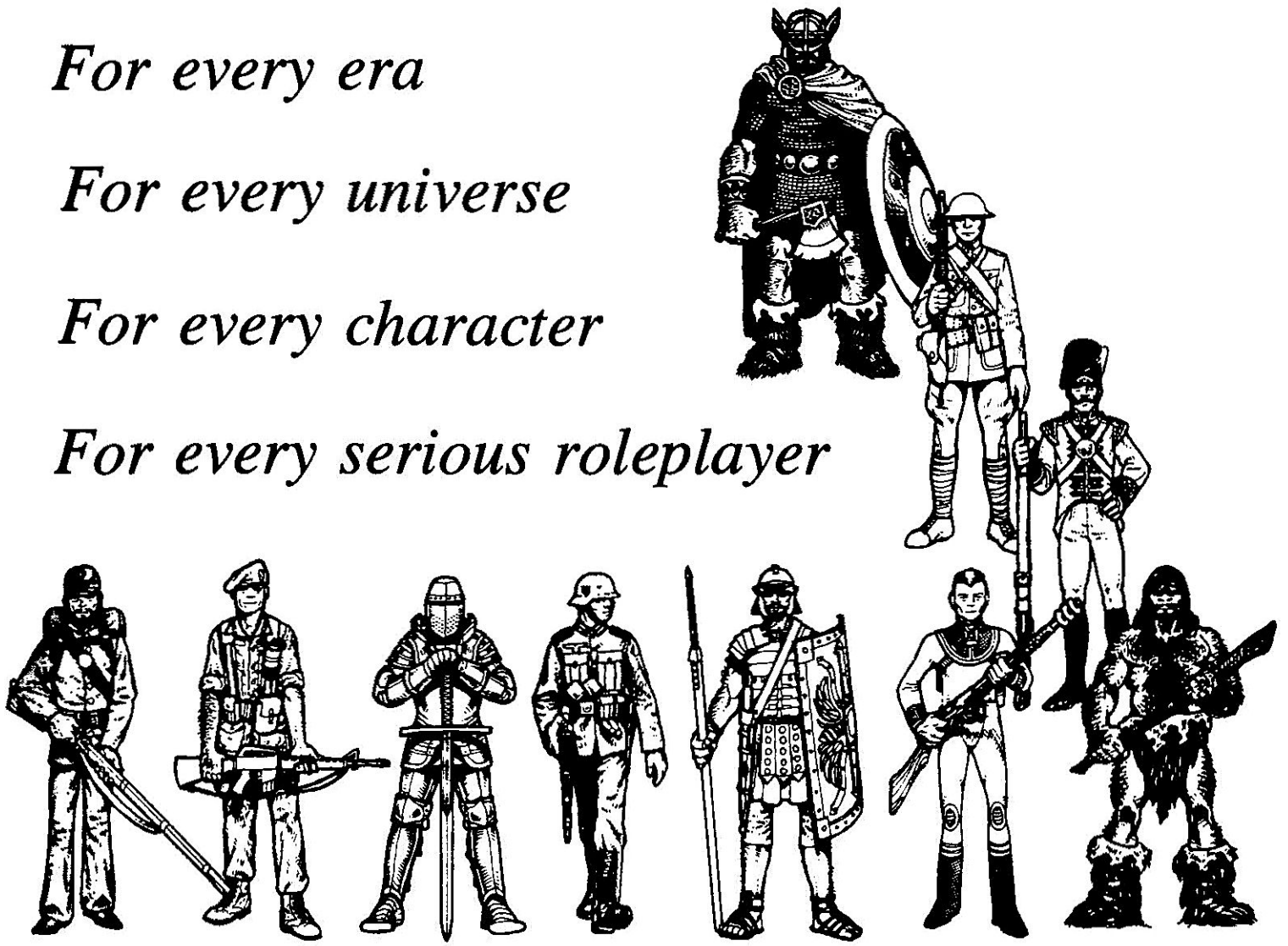
	Personal Development	Street Skills	School Skills	Rural Skills	Special Interests	War Zone Skills
1 or less	+1 Str	Brawling	+1 Soc	Hunting	Gun Combat	Leader
2	+1 Dex	Forgery	Administration	Bow Combat	+1 Edu	Vacc Suit
3	+1 End	Blade Combat	Liaison	Recon	Mechanical	Fwd Observer
4	+1 Soc	Gambling	Mechanical	Blade Combat	Vehicle	Streetwise
5	+1 Int	Streetwise	Electronics	Survival	Computer	Hvy Weapons
6	+1 Edu	Jack-o-Trades	Computer	Vehicle	Gambling	Gun Combat

For every era

For every universe

For every character

For every serious roleplayer



The most complete roleplaying system ever designed —

GURPS

The Generic Universal RolePlaying System

Coming this summer from

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Adventuring in the City

by Mike Beeman

Wouldn't Detroit be a great place to go adventuring?

Unfortunately, Detroit doesn't exist in most fantasy worlds, but there are cities out there that just *bubble* with excitement and intrigue. Cities provide what may be the best of all environments for fantasy adventure gaming: an ever-present, dynamic diversity. Within city walls almost anything is possible, but all too often inexperienced or timid gamemasters relegate the major urban centers to the role of trading post; the city for them is merely a place for swapping gems and jewels for gold and restocking on ropes and rations. Many GMs who only occasionally run city adventures seem to miss much of the subtlety and variety that are so integral to the metropolitan atmosphere — the very things that make city adventuring so special. The suggestions and information offered here may help you breathe a little life into your urban adventures.

The City

There are some unique considerations in urban adventuring, not the least of which is the city itself. Whether your city is an original creation or one of the many commercially available cities (which we'll discuss a bit later), it is important that your city have a personality, a distinctive "atmosphere," not unlike the bustling, electric tension of a San Francisco or the sun-induced serenity of a San Diego. Your city's overall personality will shape any adventures you set in it, so you must be familiar with the sundry facets of urban life that make a city unique. Immediately following is a list of things to take into account when developing your city, and examples of how they might take shape in a typical medieval period (c. 1250) fantasy metropolis. For the most part, intricate detail won't be necessary in answering the questions below, but try to have at least a vague idea on all of them in case they're called into play. If you're using a store-bought city, the text may only partially address, or even ignore, some of these issues. In that case, you'll have to come up with your own answers, but try to make them consistent with the spirit of the city.

Size and location. How large is your city? How much land does it control, both inside and outside its walls? What is the surrounding terrain like? Are there major waterways nearby? Is it a port town, river town, or something entirely different? Once you've answered these basic questions, you'll have to extrapolate a bit further to determine how these factors determine city life in general. A city numbers anywhere from 25,000 to 100,000 people (both within the walls and in the small communities just outside, called *faubourgs*). The walls typically enclose 600 to 900 acres of land, and most cities control large expanses of the surrounding territory for agricultural purposes. Large cities should lie on the seacoast, a lake front, or on riverbanks (often straddling the river, like London, Paris, and Florence), because the waterways will probably be the major commercial thoroughfares. There will be fairly good roads connecting urban areas, but foul weather and banditry make them much less appealing to traders than the relatively secure hold of a ship. Cities often have more than one wall; sometimes as many as three concentric rings will circle the city center. But inner walls usually won't be particularly secure, because as much of the brick as possible would have been scavenged for use in constructing the outer walls. You'll almost never see a nine-walled Minas Tirith — it is just too expensive. The outer walls usually suffice, so they're built *high* (as high as sixty feet) and *thick* (as thick as six feet) and are doubly fortified at the gates.

Government. Know the type of government, how it operates and who runs it (you *AD&D*ers, see pp. 88-90 in the ***Dungeon Master's Guide***). Who enforces the law: military or civil police? How are lawbreakers dealt with? What are the current policies on taxation? What are the advantages and disadvantages of citizenship? Can the city adequately defend itself?

As you might imagine, working out the city's governmental structure is probably the most involved part of preparing a city. Most cities have a mayor/council type of government, granted by charter from a feudal lord in exchange for an annual cash payment and a pledge of a thousand men or so for his garrison (or enough money to hire a like number of mercenaries). City government is typically oligarchic, with the families heading the most prominent guilds controlling most of the political power. Heated and bloody struggles for power within the city won't be uncommon — the Ghibelline/Guelph wars of pre-Renaissance Italy are good examples — and can

provide an inventive GM with some wonderful ideas. Usually, however, the ruling families will elect the mayor and councilors without undue bloodshed. Sometimes a policy of "co-optation" will be instituted, in which officials choose their own successors, thereby maintaining their families' power. Nobles and knights rarely dwell within the city, though they may own a house there; unless they are successful merchants as well as aristocrats, they never take part in civic government.

Police functions are usually handled by the mercenary city watch (the merchants and craftsmen comprising the militia have neither the time nor the inclination for such duties).

Trials are heard in three different courts. The *High Court*, or Count's Court, tries major crimes: murder, rape, robbery, and cases involving knights, nobles, and foreign royalty. The city's feudal Lord appoints a Provost to preside over the court. Guilty verdicts most often carry a penalty of death *plus* the confiscation of all of the defendant's worldly goods . . . which go, of course, to the Lord's treasury. Executions are by hanging; the stake is reserved for heretics, traitors, and witches — which may or may not include your average magic-user. If the Provost is in a particularly good mood, or if the bribe is large enough, one might get off with branding or flogging, or in the case of thieves, the loss of a hand. Imprisonment is very, very rarely used to punish crimes: It costs too much.

The *Town Court* tries cases of petty theft, fraud, assault, and general misdemeanors, as well as hearing civil suits. The favorite punishment here is a good stiff fine — the Town Court, you see, is one of the city's major sources of income. The mayor and three or four councilors will preside.

The *High Priest's Court*, which is the game equivalent of the medieval Bishop's Court, has jurisdiction over all clerics and other ecclesiastical employees no matter what they may be accused of. The High Priest, like the Mayor, prefers fines to physical punishment.

The Town Court would behave according to the city government's overall alignment, just as your city's religious courts, if there are any, should behave in a manner befitting the deity or deities they serve. By the high middle ages, the practices of weregild (payment to a murder victim's family as compensation), trial by ordeal (subjecting oneself to various tortures to prove one's innocence), and trial by combat were largely out of vogue, but any one of these three alternative methods of trial is a good way to get wayward player-characters out of trouble without resorting to the gibbet.

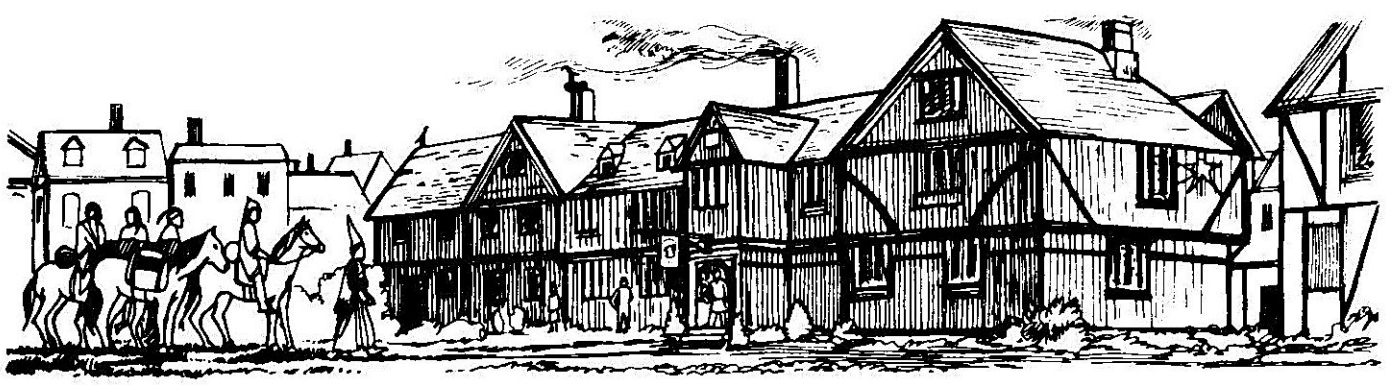
The city's primary source of income is an annual property tax. Citizens are taxed at 5% to 12% of the value of their movable wealth, and 2% to 8% of the value of their land and buildings. A poll tax is levied on the merchant class, around one to two copper pieces each, and consumers are hit with a 6% to 10% sales tax on any and all items. Everyone entering the city pays for the privilege of doing so: Citizens must pay a copper piece plus a 1% tax on goods brought into the city for sale; non-citizens must fork over five coppers for entry and pay a 2% to 5% tax on salable items. Most of the city's income is spent on defense: The walls must be maintained and manned, the mercenaries have to be paid, and the militia (usually numbering about 20% of the city's total population) has to be drilled, armed, and armored.

Industry and Economics. What are the city's major industries? How successful are they? How big, how strong, and how militant are the area's mercantile guilds? Are they intra- or intercity organizations? Are there any rivalries between competing guilds? What is the general standard of living? Is there any strife between the social strata? Keep in mind that the medieval urban community was built *by* the merchant *for* the merchant — it was not self-contained by any means, but relied very heavily on trade.

Industry in the middle ages was very different from industry today. Huge armies of workers did not tramp down to the "plant" every day for a few hours on the assembly line. Most medieval industry was cottage industry: A textile merchant, for example, would have weavers weave their wool at home, then shuttle it off to the fullers, dyers, and cutters at their respective abodes. (A few wholesale textile merchants did, in fact, organize factories of sorts, but these were rare and peculiar to the textile industry.) He would pay each worker a pittance and sell the finished product himself, often travelling to distant marketplaces personally, for a tidy profit. If this merchant was really on top of things, he would also have close ties with — or even head — the weavers', fullers', dyers', and cutters' guilds. Your city might boast a large textile industry dealing in wool, silk, cotton, or linen; or it might support a very successful brewing or winemaking industry. There is also strong trade in copper, iron, precious metals, salt, and grain. In every city the major industries are supplemented by a multitude of small craftsmen, such as armorers, smiths, tailors, and so on, who work in their homes and market their goods locally.

Mercantile guilds are powerful organizations — the guilds controlling the city's major industries usually control the city government as well. Many guilds maintain their monopolies in their particular line or field by city ordinance or by the feudal Lord's decree, giving them tremendous economic and political leverage. One medieval guild of gargantuan proportions, the Hanseatic League, controlled all commerce between fifty-two towns, organized their own armies, and regularly employed pirates to sabotage the trade between non-member cities.

Languishing beneath the economic whip of the merchant class, the independent craftsmen have been forced to form their own guilds. Everyone from goldsmiths to professional gamblers belongs to a guild, and the organiza-



tions have very strict policies concerning the quality of the merchandise their members produce and the prices they charge. Guild inspections are frequent and thorough: Substandard merchandise is immediately confiscated and the offender is heavily fined. Non-guild craftsmen are *not* tolerated.

The strife between the merchant and the craft and worker classes is an excellent device for adding depth and intrigue to your city. Things can really get hot for the player-characters if the entire city erupts into civil war in the middle of an adventure: Sudden and bloody uprisings are not at all uncommon, simply because the merchant class is so uncompromisingly tyrannical. Even if the whole city doesn't break into open warfare, the tension civil strife creates can add a whole new dimension to the adventure.

Religion. What major religious sects are present in the city? Is there a state-mandated religion? Do the guilds dictate their members' religious lives? The real ones often did; religious freedom, you must keep in mind, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Most fantasy games do assume a polytheistic religious system, but that does not mean that *every*one is *pan*theistic. Most people, at least in this author's fantasy milieu, accept only two or three gods as *true* gods. The rest of the pantheon, to them, is simply myth; people who worship those gods are either laughed at or tried for heresy. Which gods are the "true" gods varies from area to area, of course, so an adventurer from the Western Regions might get into a bit of trouble if he travels back east and maintains his western worship. Religion in your city depends on the religious orientation of your campaign — that goes without saying — but try to make its spiritual emphasis related to its economic interests (e.g., Dionysus is the patron god of a winemaking town).

These are the issues you're going to have to deal with when you develop your city. Remember: It is not necessary, and may not be possible, to plan the entire city in close detail before you play in it. If you intend to use the city as a home base for the player-characters or for a long series of adventures, then you'll obviously have to do a good deal of preliminary preparation, but it would be ridiculous to put in that much time on a city designed for just one or two adventures. In either case, you should be able to decide on the little specific items, like the police chief's name, as they're called into play.

Demi-Humans

Everything we've discussed up to this point has dealt with cities of a predominantly human populace. Cities with a heavily-mixed populace will also have to deal with the issues of race relations — is there any strife between the races? How are the races distributed — that is, do they tend to cluster or are they well-mixed? The following section deals with what might be called the "urban" life of the four major demi-human races: halflings, gnomes, dwarves, and elves.

The halflings don't build cities in the human sense of the word, preferring the spacious, slow-paced town life. Their little communities are spread across rolling green hills or pleasant pasture land and consist of both small cottages and burrows in the tradition of Bag End. As a rule, hobbit towns are located fairly close to settlements of the larger races. This serves a twofold purpose: It makes the area more secure, and it makes commerce much, much easier. Security is a halfling obsession. Their towns are always surrounded by at least a palisade, and the palisade is constantly manned by bow-armed sentries. "Big folk" are commonly asked to check their weapons when entering the town, and order is well kept within by a friendly but vigilant watch. Agriculture is the major halfling industry, especially foodstuffs, decorative plants, and the world's finest tobacco; but the little folk also mix a pretty mean brew.

For all their differences in personality, gnomish and dwarven population centers are very much alike. Both consist of extensive subterranean complexes that include living space, meeting halls, storage areas, forges, mines — in short, all the necessities and even a few of the comforts of life, save farmlands and orchards. Gnomes are much more likely than their slightly taller cousins, the dwarves, to maintain small aboveground settlements near the underground ones to facilitate trade; the dwarves prefer coming down out of the mountains to having their trading partners come to them — an arangement that allows them to protect their own interests better. Visitors are *not* welcome underground in either dwarven or gnomish communities unless that visitor is very well known and highly regarded by the community as a whole. Both races are able to defend their privacy: All entrances to the underground are heavily guarded, even the secret ones, and the gnomes' open-air trading posts are protected by stout stone walls. Trade for both races runs to an exchange of ores, precious stones, and finished metal goods for textiles, foodstuffs, and, particularly for the dwarves, finished woodwork (i.e., casks, barrels, chests, etc.).

The elven people care little for urban life, but in a world beyond their control they must make some concessions to expediency. Elven cities are few, far between, and smaller than their human counterparts — their primary function is not a commercial but a centralizing one. It is in the cities that the elven armies muster, that the limited policies of government are formed and enacted, and that the enemies of elvenkind are determined and orders for counteraction given. Their cities do perform a secondary commercial function, however, for the elves rarely deem it worthwhile to leave

their lands merely for business reasons. Their trading partners come to them, and it is only in the cities that any sort of central organization can be found. The dwarves bring down jewelry, gems, and *mithril* ore for fine elven cloth, silk, and quality foodstuffs. The humans trade their more varied (if crude) foodstuffs, spices, and wine for silk, woodcraft, and that ever-precious, rare suit of elven chainmail. Elven cities are rarely (if ever) walled, for one simple reason: They are rarely (if ever) assaulted. Their location, in or near large forests, makes the approach difficult and deadly for an army not as skilled in the ways of the woods as the elves. Cities also serve as the base for large garrisons of elven infantry, cavalry, and especially the famed elven bowman units, so they are quite safe without the ugly, offensive burden of walls. (See Roger Moore's "Point of View" series in *Dragon* Magazines #58-#61, reprinted in *Best of Dragon, Volume III.*)

Cities for Sale

If you're interested in trying some urban adventuring but are daunted by the task of designing a whole city, then you might want to try one of the many commercially available cities. The best that this author has come across is Chaosium's ***Thieves' World***. It is excellently organized, well structured, and easily understandable. It contains a very good random encounter system, floor plans to many of the shops, and a very detailed set of books that includes both a GM's guide and a players' guide. My only complaint about ***Thieves' World*** is that it attempts too much: It's keyed for nine different gaming systems, which can be cumbersome if not confusing at times. It also has a tendency to give sparse and disappointingly simple descriptions of shops and the like, but it's probably too much to ask for close detail in something of that magnitude. It is by far the most complete city I've seen.

Before you decide on any store-bought city, make sure of a few things. First, make sure it's for the right game system — don't pick up a city made for ***Tunnels & Trolls*** or ***RuneQuest*** if you want to play ***AD&D***, and vice versa. Second, see if you can sneak a peek at an open copy (most stores should have a display copy). Check to see if it is coherently organized, understandably written, and, above all, *complete*. Bad organization will make the city almost impossible to use during play; if there is no index, for example, it may take five or ten minutes to find the tavern the party ducked into for a drink. Badly written material can make the entire item unusable because you can't make heads or tails out of the descriptions. I know some people who have gotten really irate when they bought products that weren't complete in one package: They had to buy four equivalent packages to get the entire city. Remember, the first and most important element of a good city adventure is a good city.

The Adventure

The one thing to keep in mind when preparing an adventure in the city is that it's a *big* place with *lots* of people. This is a mixed blessing — it gives you, the GM, nearly limitless resources in a small area, but it also puts a few constraints on you. First, the city adventure must have a high degree of clarity. The players have to know what their *immediate* objectives are and have some clues as to how to attain them. This is not to say that the GM has to give away the plot of the adventure. The party's *ultimate* goal may be kept a mystery until the players discover it for themselves, but the players have to know what they're doing. If they have only a vague notion of what it is they're trying to accomplish it is quite possible, and even probable, that the party will wander around the city streets for days without getting anywhere. You have to subtly guide the party toward the adventure. For example, one hearty and very brave group of adventurers has been hired by the local Aristocrat's Association of Appleton (the AAA) to stamp out the young but healthy Thieves' Guild that just moved into town. How does the GM let the party get hold of the first clue? They shouldn't have to wander around until they stumble onto something, that's for sure. How about an anonymous tip slipped into someone's pocket? Or an assassin sent by the guild that bungles the job and is captured? Be creative, but maintain the clarity of the adventure.

Secondly, you should use a good deal of common sense and discretion in preparing the adventure. There are some things that just do not work in an urban setting: large melees above ground (murder is a crime!); haunted houses (every adventurer in the city would be there); "forgotten" underground passageways filled with horrible nasties that are just *there*, without rhyme or reason (*reasonable* forgotten passageways are really neat, however, especially when they're filled with *reasonable* horrible nasties); flashy, fiery, fatal displays of magic (they make people nervous); and marching around town with an army of zombies trailing behind (that *really* makes people nervous). There are many more things that the urban environment rules out, but this short list should suffice to give you an idea of what kinds of things don't work in the city. Adventures should be designed so that the party doesn't *have* to do any of these things; they may if they wish, but they'll have to suffer the consequences . . .

The major difficulty in running a city adventure is its fluidity: People keep moving around, getting lost in crowds, ducking into buildings that haven't been detailed, and so on. A lot of what goes on during play is what may be called "educated guessing" on the GM's part. It helps to decide beforehand where important NPCs are at certain times of day (e.g., "Mojo has a 50% chance of being passed out behind the Flailing Whale Tavern after sundown"). It might also be a good idea to set up a "beat" for the city watch in the area the adventure takes place in, just so you'll know where they are at what time.

There are far, far too many types of adventures possible in the city to be enumerated here, so there is no excuse for any GM to fall back on the old standbys like spy rings, smugglers, and nefarious-creatures-from-below-the-city adventures unless you throw an original twist or two into the plot. Here is a list of a few basic scenarios that can easily be fleshed out into full-blown adventures:

1. The city's assassins' guild has been getting too big for its breeches, and a rival guild (or the city government) wants to put it back in its proper place. A party of adventurers, or perhaps just one or two, is hired to infiltrate the guild and, once they discover his identity, dispose of the guildmaster. The characters need not be assassins — in fact, it's more fun if they're not, especially if some sort of initiation is involved and actual assassinations must be performed. No one thinks faster than a magic-user in the "Assassin's Run"!

2. The city is fraught with factional strife: Several prominent families are vying for control. One family employs the party as a "hit squad" to remove the opposition, which includes a high-level fighter, a merchant princeling (who happens to be a thief of exceptional merit), and a young, energetic, and thoroughly evil wizard. It is entirely possible, of course, that one or more of these opposition leaders may hear of the hit squad and form their own "anti-hit squad" squad.

3. A low-level party is hired to guard a powerful mage's favorite possession, and told that their lives are forfeit if the item is stolen. They can be easily traced if they try to escape: The mage has a crystal that will see to that. The item, of course, disappears. The party must find and return it before the mage finds them.

With a few personal touches, any of these little situations can be turned into a pretty good adventure. Some of your most interesting sessions in the city, though, will be purely spur-of-the-moment. Random encounters, sudden flashes of inspiration, and unexpected actions taken by players can and often will trigger mini-adventures, so be prepared to think quickly.

Look out, Detroit — here we come! □

Thief for a Day

by Rick Swan

Thieves' Guild & Haven

Call me a spoilsport, but to keep the peace in my group of *D&D*ers, I've had to introduce a new house rule: no more unlawful player-characters. Sure, it tends to break the monotony when a member of the adventure party suddenly reveals his true nature and runs off with the group's treasure or betrays his teammates to save his own skin. After all, that's what makes roleplaying interesting, right?

Well, maybe not. The consensus of my group was that our current campaign was hard enough without having to worry about the loyalty of their comrades. Besides, in roleplaying as in life itself, it's nice to make the trip with people you can trust.

There's no denying, however, the appeal of playing a bad guy — a character with his own standards of ethics who operates outside the confines of conventional society. That's the premise of ***Thieves' Guild***, a roleplaying system from Gamelords that allows you to flout the law to your heart's content in a Tolkien-like setting of elves, hobbits, and orcs. Add this to Gamelords' ***Haven***, a remarkably detailed city-in-a-box with dozens of potential scenarios for thievery, and you're all set to embark on a long life of crime.

D&D Goes to College

Beginning your criminal career first requires a trip through *Basic Character Creation*, a 32-page book also used in Gamelords' ***Naked Sword*** (for warrior-type characters) and ***Paths of Sorcery*** (for magic users). Players pick a basic character type from a list which includes humans, dwarves, and a few oddballs like centaurs and pixies and roll up the character's basic attributes (strength, stamina, coordination, etc.) on 3d6. Other characteristics, such as hit points and saving rolls, are then derived from these scores.

Sound familiar? Let's just say that ***Dungeons & Dragons*** players ought to feel right at home in the ***Thieves' Guild*** universe. To be sure, all fantasy roleplaying games owe a debt to *D&D*, but the designers of ***Thieves' Guild*** seem content to add complexity to what is essentially an expanded ***Dungeons & Dragons*** system, rather than attempting much innovation of their own.

For instance, where ***Dungeons & Dragons*** character generation ends, ***Thieves' Guild*** is just getting warmed up. What follows the section on saving rolls is a chart-filled, numbingly-detailed 20 pages of instructions on rolling up family backgrounds, character training, languages, weapon use, sensory abilities, you name it — and all this is still part of the *basic* book. It took me dozens of dice rolls and a couple of hours just to get my practice elf off the ground.

To the designers' credit, most of these rules are carefully written with clear examples throughout. But the key question is, of course, how well does it all work?

By way of illustration, imagine a situation requiring a character to listen at a door. In a system such as ***Dungeons & Dragons*** or ***Call of Cthulhu***, this action generally requires a single roll of the dice matched against the character's ability. Specifics of the outcome are then more or less up to the GM.

Here's how you listen at a door in ***Thieves' Guild***: (1) determine how far away the sound is, cross-reference on a chart for a modifier; (2) determine how loud the sound is, cross-reference on a chart for a modifier; (3) add modifiers depending on whether the sound is indoors or outdoors; (4) determine the presence of competing sounds, cross-reference on a chart for modifiers; (5) add modifiers, cross-reference on a chart, taking into consideration the character's race; (6) add racial and training modifiers to this base chance; (7) make roll; (8) make another roll for "comprehension" to determine how much the character actually understood.

Believe me, after a few rounds of this your players are going to think twice before they waste a lot of time listening at doors.

It should be pointed out that all of these rules aren't absolutely necessary to play ***Thieves' Guild***. The system is flexible enough to accommodate even the laziest GM (like me) by having the players roll up the basic attributes and winging it from there. But this fascination with charts and numbers illustrates, I think, an all-too-common problem in roleplaying designs: confusing complexity with depth.

Wargamers love this kind of stuff (I'm a ***Squad Leader*** addict myself, complete with its 100 plus pages of insanely complicated rules), but roleplaying has more in common with make-believe than it does with chess or ***Air War***. Depth of involvement in roleplaying comes from the imagination of the players (with suggestions from the system), not from the amount of formulas and charts you need to carry out the most routine character activities. I say, get rid of the numbers and get on with the game.

That said, let's get back to the bad guys.

The Criminal Life

Having graduated from *Basic Character Generation*, it's time to get down to the serious business of thievery with the 40-page ***Thieves' Guild*** book, which includes guidelines for pickpocketing, disguises, and other necessary crafts and skills for the successful scoundrel. Although it reads more like a collection of magazine articles than an integrated rules system, there are some nifty ideas along the way.

Unfortunately, the rules continue to be burdened with excessive detail and chart-heavy calculations. Want to pick a lock? Then you've got to cross-reference its complexity against the neighborhood it's in and the skill of the thief, while taking into account the effects of the time spent, trap mechanisms, and the chances of other party members. (You can bet there are no high school dropouts in the Thieves' Guild.)

Movement isn't much easier, what with terrain, facing, encumbrance, and weather all among the variables which must be factored in — it's as if the designers were encouraging you to stay put. The difficulty of simply moving from place to place is especially frustrating, considering that the combat rules are relatively smooth. Combat is nothing special (weapons have a base chance of hitting modified by the defender's armor and do a die or two worth of damage), but its simplicity is a surprising and welcome relief.

In fact, ***Thieves' Guild*** really blooms for the first time in the "Alternative Combat" sections, which outline (in detail, of course) such pleasantries as backstabbing, strangulation, and ambushing. Particularly delightful is a scholarly discussion on the use of poisons, which comes complete with statistics for potency, symptoms, and antidotes for dozens of deadly substances. The guidelines for fencing stolen goods and ransoming prisoners are equally good, as is a section on the medieval justice system which includes everything you need to know to conduct your own trials (right down to your choice of twelve different NPC judges).

There's no magic to speak of in ***Thieves' Guild***, and that's okay (***Thieves' Guild*** characters aren't supposed to be spellcasters). What's not okay are the skills that are conspicuous in their absence. For instance, why no discussion of counterfeiting or forgery or smuggling? Or gambling? Or blackmail or embezzlement? A good thief's bag of tricks ought to be as extensive as a good magician's, don't you think? And that material belongs here, not in the inevitable (and expensive) supplements.

The Verdict, Please . . .

The ***Thieves' Guild*** set is rounded out with a discussion of the Guild itself (sort of a bad

Because it's still more fun to play the bad guys!

Thieves' Guild

THE FANTASY SYSTEM

Completely Revised Second Edition!

$15 boxed

Gamelords, Ltd.
18616 Grosbeak Terrace
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

guys' club, useful as a kick-off point for adventures), a separate scenario book (a set of mostly unrelated single encounters; playable but unspectacular), some uninspiring maps, and a pretty good character sheet.

It's tempting to dismiss ***Thieves' Guild*** as an awkwardly developed chart collection, a derivative system that adds little or nothing to roleplaying aside from a few skill suggestions for thieves. But the ideas that work (the judicial system, poison tables, several of the Guild scenarios) are worth investigating by anyone roleplaying in a fantasy setting. They don't, though, justify the purchase of an entire game. If more effort had gone into developing ***Thieves' Guild*** as a supplement instead of a complete system, it'd be worth the asking price. As it stands, thieves on a budget are advised to save their money.

Welcome to HAVEN

Happily, ***Haven*** is another story. Although brought to you largely by the same people who brought you ***Thieves' Guild***, here the designers have wisely opted for a more generic approach, coming up with an impressive supplement that can easily be adapted for use with ***Dungeons & Dragons***, ***RuneQuest***, or just about any other fantasy roleplaying system.

Haven is nothing less than a fully-realized city intended as a setting for full-length adventures or as a home base for stopover encounters between larger campaigns. Each of the seven boroughs of Haven comes with its own booklet, each more or less following the same easy-to-use format: An overview of its history and politics is followed by detailed descriptions of local NPCs, shops, families, and storylines. Suffice to say, with literally hundreds of characters and places to choose from, if you want it, you can probably find it somewhere in Haven (and there's a nice set of maps included to help you get there).

It's an excellent design, and the enthusiasm the designers brought to the project is evident throughout. If the characters occasionally lapse into stereotypes and if the scenarios occasionally seem overly familiar . . . given the size and scope of ***Haven***, such flaws are easy to forgive.

So what exactly are you supposed to do with all this? There are plenty of possibilities. If you're running an ongoing campaign, you can use the facilities in Haven to rest up and re-outfit. If you've got an hour or so to kill, Haven is perfect for shorter adventures. Trade your treasures, sell your artifacts, recruit some helpers, go out on a date. The sky's the limit.

And if you've got scrappy players like I do, you can always threaten to lock 'em up in a Haven jail cell and throw away the key. □

THIEVES' GUILD (Gamelords, Ltd.); $15. Designed by Richard Meyer, Kerry Lloyd, and Michael Watkins. 32-page Basic Character Creation book, 40-page Thieves' Guild book, 32-page scenario book, 4 pages of maps, character sheet, boxed. Revised edition published 1984.

HAVEN, THE FREE CITY (Gamelords, Ltd.); $15. Designed by Richard Meyer, Kerry Lloyd, Janet Trautvetter, Michael Welker, Larry Richardson, and Michael Watkins. Nine booklets, 140 pages total. One 34" x 22" map, ten 8½" x 11" maps, boxed. Published 1984.

Adventuring in the World of THIEVES' GUILD

by Rick Swan

Gamelords has been cranking out play aids and adventures for some time now, including (not surprisingly) a continuing series of campaign modules for its ***Thieves' Guild*** system. Here's a quick look at three of them: ***Within the Tyrant's Demesne***, ***City of the Sacred Flame***, and ***Lair of the Freebooters***.

Possibly because they all draw from the same pool of designers, these modules share more similarities than differences. All are set in the world of Haven, with care taken to preserve continuity from setting to setting (no simple feat considering the vast amounts of information in the ***Haven*** series). They also share the same format, consisting of a very detailed historical background followed by descriptions of key NPCs and locales and ending with suggestions for scenarios. The writing is clear and generally to the point, but the graphics are dull and uninviting. Maps, sad to say, are few and far between.

Best of the bunch is ***City of the Sacred Flame***, with its interesting mix of political intrigue and mysterious cults. The characters are diverse and sharply drawn, and there are nice sections on running arena games and exotic bazaar sales. Though the scenarios are a little on the mundane side, there's plenty of solid material to inspire several good adventures.

Within the Tyrant's Demesne is a related adventure, set in the same general area as ***City of the Sacred Flame*** and providing plenty of opportunities for crossover encounters. The basic premise involves the evil Count Utrant's tyrannical reign over a diverse society, with the aid of his storm-trooping Redshirts to keep the rabble in line. (Any resemblance to the Third Reich is coincidental, I'm sure.) Players may infiltrate the Wizards' Guild or the Sovereign Society to make trouble. The setting is heavily political and may be too dry for some, but clever touches abound — I especially liked the "Weepons" shop operated by an enterprising insect (who's all business).

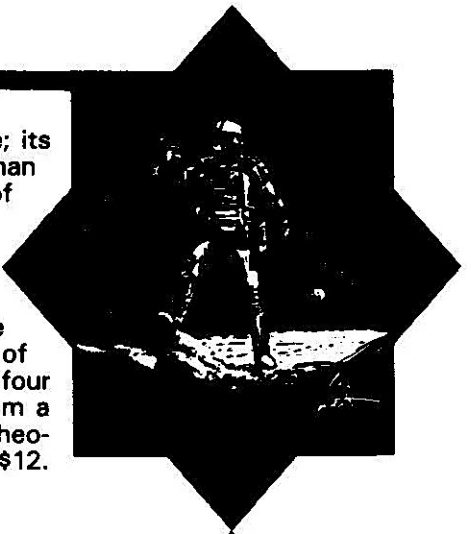
Less interesting is ***Lair of the Freebooters***, which presents a setting for seafaring and island adventures under the ever-present threat of piracy. Although it's well-presented, roleplayers who've been around awhile have probably run across much of this elsewhere and will find more of the same here. Those with an insatiable taste for the high seas, however, will want to check out the sections on ship weaponry, naval tactics, and crew skills.

A word of warning: Unlike modules produced by, say, TSR, there are no book-length adventures to be found here. It'll take some work to put together a campaign-length adventure from this material; and if you need to translate it into another roleplaying system, prepare to invest a fair amount of time before you can actually begin to play.

As supplements to the Haven mythos, these modules are well worth the asking price. For those not sold on either ***Haven*** or ***Thieves' Guild***, consider them a treasure hunt — there's a wealth of playable ideas if you're up to digging them out. □

CITY OF THE SACRED FLAME, WITHIN THE TYRANT'S DEMESNE, LAIR OF THE FREEBOOTERS (Gamelords, Ltd.); $6.95 each. Designed by Walter Hunt and Richard Meyer. (Freebooters designed by Janet Trautvetter, Kerry Lloyd, and Kevin Hardwick.) Adventure modules for Thieves' Guild and other fantasy roleplaying systems. 48 pages each. Published 1983.

Alien Worlds



Every world is a universe.

Every world is a unique and complex environment, and there are thousands in the **Traveller** universe. **Traveller** boxed modules are designed to demonstrate the immense scope for adventure of a single world, described in detail. The world of the first module, *Tarsus*, has a gigantic axial tilt and a year only 70 days long, a diverse population with a lengthy history, and much more.

BeltStrike is the newest module; its subject is the sparsely settled Bowman asteroid belt, a lawless collection of (potentially valuable) rocks. It includes detailed information on Bowman's history, inhabitants, and mysteries, plus extensive rules for prospecting and mining the asteroids. Also included are a map of the asteroid settlement Koenig and four folders with scenarios ranging from a claim-jumping attempt to an archeological dig. Each boxed module is $12.

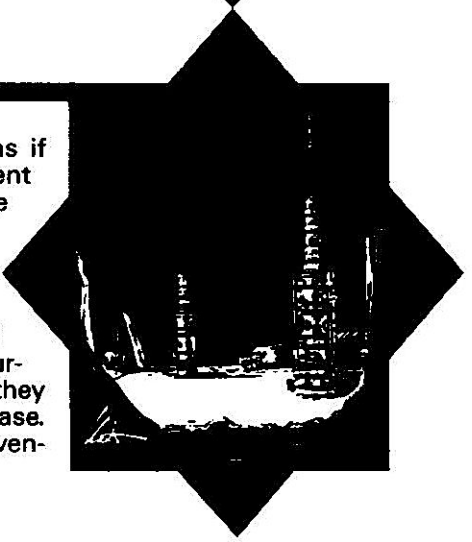
Alien Minds

In Traveller, aliens aren't just people in funny suits.

They're different in the way that's important to a roleplaying game: they come supplied with their own highly unusual thought patterns, customs, and civilizations.

Each **Traveller** alien module describes one race in detail, including extensive explanatory material, a complete character generation system, and an alien adventure. *Aslan* covers a race of carnivores, with males and females divided nearly into separate cultures: males are warriors, fighting ritualized clan wars, while females take care of almost everything else. *K'kree* (or Centaurs) are militant and aggressive vegetarians, their society strictly controlled with a complex caste system. Their social unit is not the individual, but the "family" with members of several castes; each player controls a "family". Each alien module is $6.

Alien Mystery



The Secret of the Ancients:

Who were the mysterious Ancients? They appeared suddenly 300,000 years ago possessed of unguessably high technology, ruled the known universe for a few thousand years, and then destroyed themselves in a great war which left behind the shattered remains of worlds. They carried humans to the stars, created the Vargr, and left behind a few puzzling artifacts. Each known Ancient site is different, as if there were hundreds of independent super-races, each with its distinctive technology, but everything fits the hands and bodies of the Droyne, an unassuming race inhabiting a few worlds in the Spinward Marches. Who were they? Why did they disappear? A band of adventurers has the chance to find out as they discover a functioning Ancient base. *The Secret of the Ancients:* an adventure for **Traveller**. $5.

TRAVELLER®

GDW Game Designers' Workshop
P.O. Box 1646
Bloomington, Illinois 61702-1646

Write for our free catalog.

TALISMAN

Featured Review
by Matthew J. Costello

Not too many years ago, a marvelous book was published. It was called *The Boardgame Book*, and it was massive, slip-cased and oversized, with page after page of color reproductions of classic boardgames. Author R.C. Bell included ancient games from the Pharaohs, Aztecs, Greeks, and Romans, as well as more familiar games like chess. The book was beautiful, a boardgame lover's dream.

Some of the most intriguing games in the book were "race" games, where players simply go from start to finish. There was ***Gold Rush***, with its maze of mines; ***Up the Klondyke***, (with spaces that read: "Miss turn in rapids — man overboard"); and ***The Travellers***, with its exquisitely etched map of the world complete with important landmarks. Though these games had unchallenging rules, their boards evoked a world of imagination.

Now, in this era of 30-page rulebooks and two-tone mapboards, comes ***Talisman***, from Games Workshop of England. Designed by Robert Harris and with Gary Chalk's fine art, ***Talisman*** takes the old-fashioned race game and adds elements from the world of roleplaying.

In ***Talisman: The Magical Quest Game***, the object is to acquire a magical talisman that allows you to enter the Valley of Fire. From there you can attain the Crown of Command which allows you to use a Command spell to destroy or subdue the other players. In short, getting the crown means victory.

The board has three distinct sections. The outer section includes spaces like the Chapel, the Tavern, the Village, and the City, as well as fields, woods, and plains. Some spaces allow you to buy weapons or learn spells, while others require that you draw an "adventure" card. These turn up everything from magic items to monsters.

Separated from the outer edge by a river, the middle section includes a Cursed Glade, a Temple, the Warlock's Cave, and the Portal of Power — the gateway to the inner region.

The inner region includes such pleasant squares as the Werewolves' Den, the Vampire's Tower, Dice With Death, and the Valley of Fire. Dead center on the board is the goal — the Crown of Command.

Each player begins by picking one of the 14 character cards. These include such well-known folk as the thief, the wizard, the troll, and the giant. These cards list each character's alignment (neutral, good, or evil), starting space, and any special abilities that character has. These abilities (such as the thief's ability to steal from other players) can be very important in the game. The characters also receive counters for their strength, craft, gold, and lives — all of which can change for good or ill as the game progresses and characters make their way to the inner region.

There are a number of things that make ***Talisman*** special. Though it is a boardgame, you do not have to move in one direction ***a la Monopoly;*** if a space appears unappetizing one way, you can always try the other direction. Most spaces require players to draw an adventure card — sometimes picking up a magic item or a powerful sword, other times revealing an attack. If the attacker revealed by the card is not defeated he/she/it remains in that space. In addition, any items that can't be picked up (each character has a four-item limit) stay in the space where they were found. There are also followers, like the Dwarf, who turn up and can be crucial to winning the game.

Pretty soon the board is filled with cards; the more you play, the more changes occur. Items are picked up and others are dropped. Monsters appear and suddenly make certain parts of the board a bit tricky. Weather cards can affect movement. Some cards reveal secret places, such as the Shrine, where you can acquire gold, or a life, or even teleport to any other space.

Luck plays an important part in ***Talisman***. A good basic strategy is to pick up some extra lives and gold, and maybe a follower or two, before crossing the river to the middle region. Crossing can be done by fighting the Sentinel (very difficult), building a raft (you'll need to get an axe), or going to the tavern and waiting to be ferried across to the Temple. Whichever path you choose, make sure you've bought all the weapons and shields you may need before you cross the river.

Once in the middle region you can try to get a talisman in one of two ways: by going to the temple and risking some of your lives, or by carrying out a quest for the Warlock (killing another character, for example). Then it's off to the Portal of Power where you can test your Strength or Craft against the locked door which bars the way to the innermost region.

The last part of the journey is a real joyride: The Mines can send you back to the outer region; the Vampire's Tower will gobble up your lives; the Dice with Death space involves a grisly little gambling game with Old Mr. Bones; and the Werewolves' Den can make mincemeat of all but the strongest characters.

And after you've suffered through all that, you might have to battle another player for the prize — the Crown of Command — a battle that only one can win.

A tough little game, and a lot of fun, too. It takes a few playings before you start to see what must be done to win. But the game, with its ever-changing board, always seems to hold surprises: A magical weapon turns up that you have to have; thieves take all your stuff and dump it in the desert; the Warlock can demand an exorbitant price for a talisman. With over 100 adventure cards, there's plenty of variety.

I have only two small complaints: The typeface on the board spaces is difficult to read from across the table. Also, since there are only a few ways to get a talisman, that process becomes somewhat automatic. This aspect of the game would be more interesting if there were many different ways to get one and you were never sure exactly what you wanted.

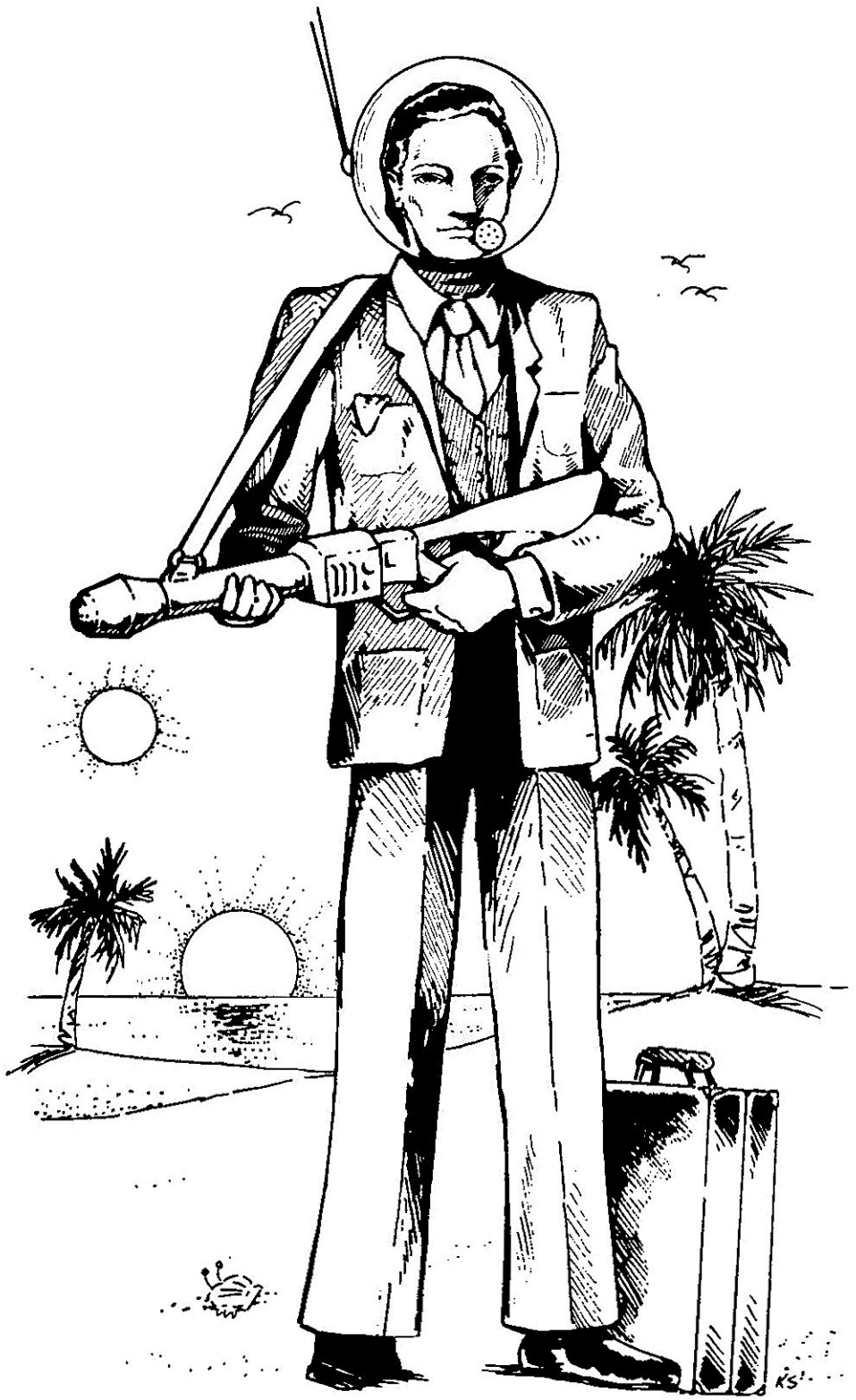
This is an ideal fantasy game for your non-gaming friends or relatives. There's enough familiar "boardgame" here so that they'll be comfortable, but ***Talisman*** adds subtle and challenging elements from the FRP world. Who knows? You may yet get Grandma to play ***Dungeons & Dragons*** (Made my saving roll, sonny . . . heh, heh.)

And if all else fails, you can frame the board — it's a knockout. □

TALISMAN (Games Workshop): $18. Designed by Robert Harris. 8-page rulebook, 16" x 22" mounted mapboard, 196 cards, 140 color counters, one die, boxed. For 2-6 players; playing time 2-5 hours. Published 1983.

Tinker, Tailor, Starsoldier, Lightsailor

Alternate Character Classes for SPACE OPERA



by Stefan Jones

Many, if not most, of the SF roleplaying games available today use some sort of "career"-centered character-generation system. *Traveller* characters have a choice of six military or other "service"-oriented backgrounds; *Space Opera* has a somewhat wider selection, including civilian and scientific careers. But while supplements and variant articles have added a veritable pile of career types to the *Traveller* system, the choice of occupations for the *Space Opera* character is still limited. This variant will present a few ideas for new character classes and add a few skills to the list.

Character Careers

Military careers seem to be *de rigeur* for SF characters in roleplaying games. I suppose the major reason for this is to give the characters a reason for having the skills needed to use the goshawful weapons available in SF games, fly starships, and so on. If one looks at SF literature, however, one can find a fair heap of ideas on how an ordinary Joe, Jane, or J-17 got to be a hero. Starman Jones (no relation), of the Heinlein novel of the same name, received his slot on a liner by studying his late father's navigation books; Kirth Gersen of Vance's Demon Prince series was trained in the skills of assassination by an obsessed grandfather. Innumerable characters in SF grew up on the streets, farms, and so on. Nonmilitary careers can also lead to interesting adventures. Journalists of today often go to dangerous places to get stories; those of the 25th century will undoubtedly be just as mobile. Diplomats, corporation representatives, missionaries, and muck-raking busybodies could all find star travel and adventure part of their jobs. Don't assume a character is a wimp because he doesn't possess weapon skills! Don't be ashamed to have a character who is motivated by more than bloodlust, greed, and a thirst for power. Unconventional characters are what make a roleplaying campaign more than *The A-Team* in outer space!

In this variant, I'm introducing four new classes: Businessmen, Bureaucrats, Athletes, and Rogues. *Businessmen* differ from merchants in that they are less concerned with moving products than making them; they are corporate execs, salesmen, headhunters,

industrial spies, and researchers. This type of character might *seem* a trifle dull at first, but consider the possibilities: Imagine playing a salesman who's just been dropped on an alien world with a sample case and a catalogue. Your understanding of the local culture isn't perfect, and to make things worse, the competition is on the planet distributing free samples to the local warlord. Good examples of this type of character are Poul Anderson's Nicholas Van Rijn and David Falkayn.

Bureaucrats in this instance aren't paper-pushers; they're information people. Journalists, diplomats, Assistant Inspectors for the Imperial Department of Restaurants and Inns (the most feared branch of the imperial bureaucracy!), and lawyers fall into this category. While their firearms skills and combat experience might be slight, they can work wonders with even more powerful weaponry: Governments, Media, and public opinion.

Athletes are people whose livelihood depends on physical skill and action, not just sports figures. They could be hunters, naturalists, perhaps even actors or dancers.

For each of these four new classes, some information is listed below: Skills available and limitations, Material Benefits, and characteristic bonuses. Following these are descriptions of the new skills and a few notes on the General Skills listed in the book.

Businessmen:

Characteristic Bonuses: +30 to IQ, Intuition, Leadership, and GTA.
Skill Points: 3 x Empathy, 2 x IQ, 5 x Leadership, plus 4 per year in the service. General Skills Bonus: 6d6 points.
Available Skills: General Skills, Rhetoric, Media, Civ. Comp. Programming, Linguistics, General Social Science, Merchant.
Material Benefits: Minicomp (Model = 1/2d6 + 1), 50 x IQ x 3d6 in credits, Pension if over 20 years of service (yearly stipend equal to CR 500 x 3d6 + 3, plus CR 1000 per position . . . see below).
Contacts: 1d6 x (Intuition + Empathy).

Bureaucrats:

Characteristic Bonuses: +30 to IQ, Intuition, Leadership, and Empathy.
Skill Points: 2 x Empathy, 2 x IQ, 5 x Leadership, 5 per year. Bonus points for General Skills: 6d6.
Skills Available: General Skills, Historical Sciences, Psychology, Rhetoric, Law, Media, Civ. and Sci. Comp. Programming, Forgery, Administration, Counterfeiting, Diplomacy.
Material Benefits: Minicomp (Model = Rank + 1), Credits = (Empathy + Leadership) x 10 x 3d6, Pension (after 20 years) = rank squared x 3d6 + 3 x CR 500.
Contacts: Rank x Empathy.

Athletes:

Characteristic Bonuses: +35 to Physique, Strength, Constitution, Agility, Dexterity, Bravery, and Intuition.
Skill Points: 3 x Agility, 2 x Constitution, 5 x Strength and Bravery *or* (for actors, etc.) Leadership and Empathy. 6d6 bonus for General Skills. 3 points per year in career.
Skills Available: General Skills, Survival Skills, Media, Firearms and Archaic Weapons, Scout, Acrobatics.
Material Benefits: Target Weapon/Archaic Weapon, Sports and outdoor equipment (value = years x CR 1000), Cash = Leadership or Bravery x 3d6 + years x CR 500. No pension available; no rank for Athletes.
Contacts: Leadership x 1d6.

Rogues:

Characteristic Bonuses: +30 to anything but psionics.
Skill Points Available: 5 x Intuition, Intelligence, and Bravery, plus 2 x Agility and Strength, *minus* Empathy.
Skills Available: All general, restricted general, armsmen skills, Hacking, Cracking I, Cracking II. All Scientific, Technical, and Astronaut skills cost *triple* rather than double, because they are out of the typical rogue's element.
Material Benefits: Any two sidearms or melee weapons, light body armor, crime tools appropriate to skills possessed, Cash = CR 500 x 3d6 + 3 x (average of Intuition, IQ, and Leadership). Debts = 2d100 x CR 50. (The rogue trades off debts for enemies; each CR 100 of debts traded for enemies results in one bounty hunter, angry spouse, or disgruntled official looking for the character).
Contacts: Rank squared, plus Empathy and Leadership.

Ranks & Prestige

To reduce complexity, the level of achievement that a character reaches in any of the above careers is reduced to one of six levels of prestige or position. A character starts off at the lowest level; a roll is made each year of the character's career to see if he or she has made a level jump. The percentage chance that a promotion is given is equal to: (years in career + IQ + Class attribute x 2) − (rank you're trying for squared + 1d6). If, for example, a rank 2 bureaucrat with an IQ of 12, Leadership of 14 (this is the "Class attribute" of the Bureaucrat), and with five years of service behind him tries for a promotion, he will need to roll under a 35 at most; possibly as low as a 30, depending on the random factor. A character who gets a promotion may not roll for another on the year after the promotion, and his/her chances of rolling one on the year after that are halved. The ranks are:

Note that Rogues and Athletes don't actually have ranks; the relative prestige of the character at the moment is his or her "rank." The Class Attributes are: Businessmen/IQ, Bureaucrats/Leadership, Rogues/Average of Bravery and Intuition, Athletes/Average of Agility and Strength, *or* Leadership and Empathy (the latter two are used for actors and celebrity-types).

New Skills

Rhetoric: The ability to argue a point, support a position, make a case. Combined with Media or the ability to write, the character possessing Rhetoric becomes an instant pundit, pedant, *vox populi*, or what have you. This skill is rated on a scale from 1 to 10, with variable skill-point costs. Lawyers, diplomats, and journalists may obtain the skill for 3 SP or six weeks of study; others must use 5 SP or ten weeks of study. The prerequisites (used when testing skills being learned during play of the game) are IQ, Empathy, and Leadership.

Media: While primitive societies depend on things like town criers, runners, and inquisitions to spread news and inform people, technological civilizations often use electronic media. This skill gives the possessing character a familiarity with the workings of electronic media such as television, radio, computer networks, and modern print media. It is not a magical skill, and must be combined with others for full effect. Diplomacy and Media would allow the character to communicate with a population as a whole without going through official channels; Law and Media could help a character sue a nosy journalist or expose corruption. The skill costs 10 SP for journalists, PR men, and politicians; others must pay 25 SP. The skill cannot be learned during the play of the game; it represents years of experience and not actual study.

Diplomacy: This skill has a prerequisite of Social Science/5, Historical Science/5, and Rhetoric/2. This is the equivalent of Streetwise for Big Shots; it includes knowledge of protocol and etiquette, knowing one's limits in alien societies, and perhaps a bit of espionage. This skill costs 5 SP for diplomats, high-level businessmen and people in the Contact Service; others must pay 10 SP (20 weeks of study). Prerequisites: IQ, Empathy, and Leadership; Intuition may be substituted for any one of these.

Hacking: Because most of the societies in the *Space Opera* universe have been dealing with computers for centuries, techniques to protect data transfer have become ferociously tough. The skills required to bust into protected data systems are hard to come by,

Rank	Businessman	Bureaucrat	Rogue	Athlete
1	Flunky	Gofer	Urchin	Beginner
2	Jun. Exec.	Jun. Exec.	Tough	Novice
3	Executive	Manager	Hood	Notable
4	Sen. Exec.	Sen. Exec.	Operator	Authority
5	Director	Director	Notable	Celebrity
6	V.P.	Secretary	Infamous	Hero

highly risky to use, and dangerous to be caught using. The skill is rated on a 1 to 10 basis; each point of expertise costs 4 SP. Prerequisites: Advanced Math/5, Computer Tech Skills for each computer type/2, Civ. and Sci. programming equal to level in Hacking. To learn the skill requires actual practice and 10 weeks per skill level. IQ, Intuition, and ElecTech attributes are used when testing for success in learning the skill.

Cracking I & II: Cracking I is familiarity with locks, primitive alarm systems, vaults, safes, and other "old fashioned" security systems. Cracking II is familiarity with hi-tech security systems, including sensors, stunfields, cameras, electronic fences, and so on. Cracking II requires Mechanical and Electronic Engineering/2 to advance beyond expertise/5. Cracking I requires 5 SP (2 SP for rogues and intelligence agents) per level, Cracking II requires 7 SP (5 for rogues, intelligence agents, or commandos) per level of expertise.

Law: This skill gives the possessing character knowledge of the law, and with sufficient practice and study the ability to practice the law. Increasing skill levels allows greater knowledge of things like loopholes, precedents, and legal politics. Rated on a 1 to 10 scale, each level of this skill costs 5 SP for lawyers, diplomats, and high-ranked businessmen to acquire; others must pay 10 SP per level. Study time to acquire the skill during play is 13 weeks; the skill is tested using IQ, Leadership, and Rhetoric skill.

Becoming a lawyer requires Law/3, Rhetoric/1, Historical and Social Sciences each at /1. Bar Exams, which a character may apply for every four pre-game or campaign years, must be passed to become a practicing lawyer. The chance to pass the exams is equal to the total of the PC's Law Skill, Rhetoric Skill, Intelligence, Intuition, and Leadership. Being a lawyer in a military or other service position allows an increased pay scale (in most organizations, lawyers receive the same pay as scientists; if in doubt, increase pay of position by 50% over that of any ordinary worker), and provides contacts in the legal profession.

Acrobatics: More than the ability to do tricks, this skill allows other actions (swimming, climbing, combat maneuvers) to be more complex and successful. Indiana Jones (no relation), Tarzan, and Flash Gordon all have this skill. The skill costs 10 SP for athletes and intelligence agents to acquire, 25 SP for others. Learning Acrobatics during play requires ten weeks of practice, and is tested at level 5 with Agility, Dexterity, and Strength as prerequisites.

General Skills Reclassified: The list of "General" skills in Book One of *Space Opera* is a varied lot. Some are truly general, everyday skills, while some should be restricted. I'd like to suggest that the following skills be put on a special, restricted list. To obtain them would cost double or perhaps triple the Skill Points/time listed if a character cannot logically obtain them on-the-job. An armsman, for example, shouldn't be able to pick up Merchant skill unless he took time off and went out of his way to learn the ropes.

Restricted General Skills: Counterfeiting, Forgery, Bribery (unless endemic in culture), Merchant, Scout, Survival (in terrain not on home planet), Administration.

Similarly, skills that a character would have difficultly getting access to during his career or due to a lack of education should cost more. Scientific, Engineering, and Medical skills (other than basics like First Aid, Chemistry, Repair of Familiar Vehicles, Math, etc.) should cost double or triple for Rogues, Bureaucrats, and Businessmen unless germane to their careers.

Contacts: Friends in high places, strings to be pulled, connections, an uncle in the IPA. Half of all contacts a player character receives must be declared at the start of the campaign: the location of the contact, his or her position and rank, powers, and so on. Other contacts may be pulled out of the hat with the GM's approval when the character needs help. Contacts will either be very limited/untrustworthy/greedy (but they can be contacted at any time), or of higher power, ability, etc., and be "one-shots." The GM should ask each player to carefully describe and justify contacts; getting in touch with a "friend" should be a situation that is roleplayed, not merely done with mirrors and dice. If a player insists that his great-aunt is a TriVee star who just happens to live on the asteroid station they are on, the GM can have some fun making up the character of the great-aunt, taking into account the possibility that rich Auntie Agnes is flat broke, or has sworn to kill the next person who asks her for a favor. □

only from DARK HORSE

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES™

Pack of four 25 mm miniatures
$3.50 plus $1.00 shipping and handling
Stock #142

At your local game retailer
or order direct from
Dark Horse Miniatures
P.O. Box 633
Boise, Idaho 83701

KEEPING POSTED

Realms of Sword and Thunder

by Jim Gould

Realms of Sword and Thunder is a computer- and human-moderated PBM for enthusiasts of all stripes. As a combination of roleplaying and tactical economics, *ROSAT* is an excellent game for the player with varied interests.

ROSAT provides the player with one leader and assorted subordinates of myriad types. Players can choose to command a realm, and can carefully nurture the economic growth of a village, or they may choose a city position, and be concerned less with economics and more with power politics. Both player types inhabit the same game world (post-Arthurian England) and interact freely. The game is open-ended, and each turn has no time limit.

The dichotomy between realm and city positions is quite distinct. Although all players operate in the same world under the same game system, the concerns of the two types of players are ofen very different and the options for city players are much more restricted than those of the realms. In addition, the work (and joy) of guiding the growth of the leader's subordinates is minimized in city positions. The benefits of the city positions are better turnaround and half the cost per turn.

What You Get

The rulebook is clear and fairly well laid-out and the examples given are clear, although the "specifics" of combat are occasionally rather unspecific. The "City Supplement Rules" for city positions are reasonable and concise. With the initial setup comes a truly mediocre map and a short description of your position and the surrounding area.

For realm players, each turn consists of two 8½" x 11" sheets of paper. On these, the player describes tradespeople to be trained, diplomacy to be attempted, where the leader and his escort will go, etc. The turn is divided into two sections, one for the leaders' individual actions, and one for realm activities. The turn sheets allow lots of room for special actions for both the leaders and the realm, but the game is rich and varied enough that this space is sometimes insufficient.

City turns are similar, on one sheet. The number of special actions is limited to three, and there is no distinction between "realm" actions and leader actions. The turnsheet is somewhat obscure, particularly in the allocating of new equipment to troops.

For both types of positions, the GMs return your original turn sheet(s) with brief comments. They also supply a computer printout of your current status and responses to any special actions of significance. This is where the game really shines: The gamemasters' responses to your ideas are excellent and creative; the more you put into your turn, the more you'll get back, but the skill and imagination of the GMs is remarkable with even minimal player input. The computer printout isn't always detailed or very lengthy, but it invariably includes *some* items of interest, and the resolution of a quest or errant gains the player a mini-adventure of considerable length and fine adventurous style.

What You Are

The roleplaying aspects of the game are quite strong. Players choose their characters' race, occupation, and whether they will be placed in fealty to an NPC liege-lord. Physical, Tactical, Diplomatic, Professional, and Trade skills are determined by the race and profession chosen. City players are assigned a Promotion rating, showing their progress in the ranks of the urbanites.

The character races available are dwarves, elves, falcon folk, feeorin, giants, glashan, gnomes, gremlins, hobgoblins, humans, and trolls. Each has notable strengths and weaknesses; giants, for instance, are by far the most powerful in combat, but they have only a 3% per turn population growth rate, and start with the lowest population of any race (50). Feeorin are virtually worthless on the offense (one feeorin = 10% of one giant) but have an excellent defense factor, and a reasonable growth rate. Humans are weak in fighting power, but they grow at a phenomenal 12% per turn from a starting population of 200. Falcon folk move rapidly, but are brittle and breed slowly. And so on . . . City players, unfortunately, are limited to humans only.

Once a leader's race has been chosen, a profession must be picked. These range from battle-hungry berserker to diplomatic druid. This parallels the "character class" concept in many RPGs, and serves to limit the actions of the players in the same way. City players choose to be economic, military, or religious leaders in addition to their heroic profession.

Each realm starts with 50 to 200 warm bodies, most of whom are either forced to work in the fields to feed the rest, or are totally untrained in any useful craft. One of the primary challenges in *ROSAT* is to shape this worthless mob into a moneymaking machine. The task never ends, as new unskilled population is added each turn. In contrast, a city player has only 2 to 10 subordinates at the start, but doesn't have to worry about feeding them, and they come trained and equipped. The city player gains followers and possessions based on rank or money spent, rather than on a fixed growth rate.

Magic is an integral part of the gameworld, and sorcerers, priests, witch doctors, and druids have their own branches of the art. Sorcerers do standard magicky things like Acid Sprays, priests tend to work miracles of varying scope, witch doctors create Undead, and druids work with nature. Spells are varied, and most players will gather a number of them, but only one spell may be used in any turn.

What You Do

For a realm player the game has two distinct levels. On one level, your leader is gallivanting about doing adventurous and heroic deeds, while on another level the realm itself must be guided and supported. The leaders are limited in the escort they may have, but they have all the fun with quests and errants. The adventures encountered are well within the standard fantasy RPG vein. In the best campaign tradition, encounters and short quests leave loose ends and side effects that lead to more interesting problems and challenges. Imagination and thought seem to be more important than brute force in most encounters with NPCs.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the people of the realm must be trained in profitable

trades and crafts. It costs money to train tradesmen, with the cost ranging from a paltry 6 silvers for a cook to over 2000 silvers for alchemists and the like. Up to 3 members of the heroic professions may be "purchased" as lieutenants, at a cost of 2000 to 5000 silvers. It pays to sit down and think about what you'll train your people to do; a slow-growing race may want more of the high-cost trades to free other warm bodies for the soldiery. There are a *bunch* of trades available; I counted at least 80, and more are constantly being added. Of course, some trades pay better than others, and it pays to check out the cost-to-income ratio for any skill you buy. The game system also gives a bonus of approximately 1% of your income for each trade you have, so variety is very useful. Unfortunately, at last report there was an artificial limit of 50 different trades in one realm. It takes a while to push this limit, though, and the folks at Empire are supposedly working on the problem.

I found playing with the numbers in my realm one of the best parts of *ROSAT*. Anyone fond of economic-style games will thoroughly enjoy this aspect.

City players (especially military ones) have the advantage of wandering the countryside with as many escorts as they can afford. They are, however, limited in the types of people they can hire, with a selection of three or four types directly linked to the leader's profession. For instance, a religious leader may hire temple guards, missionaries, or subordinates, and that's about it. Military leaders draft soldiers at no cost, but they must pay for specialty troops' equipment, and they are limited to four types of troops, sergeants, and one type of elite troop, depending on the allegiance of the player. Economic leaders may purchase guards, traders, caravans, shops, or moneylenders, most of which are meant to make more money.

From the above, the game system may seem limited to number crunching; it's really not. The GMs are always willing to allow a player's creativity full rein. The limitations of the game provide the challenge without eliminating opportunities. The GMs of *ROSAT* have a definite knack for turning insane schemes and random events into enjoyable adventures.

Combat

The combat system is reasonably simple, but a lot of factors influence the results. Each race has a Combat Factor, modified for militia or soldier training. This CF is in turn modified by the leadership present, the weapons used, strength, etc. to create an Attack Factor. The opposition calculates its Defense Factor based on racial characteristics, armor, and special defenses (if any). The defender takes casualties equal to the AF divided by the DF and further divided by the defender's CF. Simultaneously, the other side is doing to same thing to the attacker. The GM goes through three rounds of combat, at which point the turn ends and the players get a chance to take other actions based on the reported results.

The combat system is invisible in anything but a large-scale military battle. The GMs will generally just tell you how the battle ended, how many casualties you took, and how badly the opposition got damaged. The system works well and fairly. Reports are drifting in from various sources about a siege laid about Castle Karlin, and the game system appears to handle events from this magnitude down to personal combat with equal facility.

The structure of the game is designed to keep leaders alive and realms defensible, so only a very strong force will be able to take a player out. As a rule, players seem to see NPCs as easier prey, and NPCs won't suddenly appear in force to destroy your carefully-built realm without good reason. There *are* exceptions to this: Occasionally, a player will offend a neighbor, leading to some PC-to-PC warfare. Land is scarce in some of the more developed areas, and this can lead to conflict. Fortunately, all the players in any given area start at roughly the same level of development, reducing the temptation to nuke a weak or inexperienced player.

Interaction

Players can talk to each other as well as make war. Empire provides a free message service of the 3 x 5 card variety, and player cooperation and interaction are fairly easy and fun. The player interaction I've run into has been pretty limited, but quite interesting. One flaw in the game is that the trading mechanics make it much more profitable to trade with NPCs than with players. A recent newsletter has indicated that revised trading rules are in the works, and I hope the problem will be corrected soon.

One large step towards getting players together has been taken by Steve Gates, a California *ROSAT* player. His United Realms Information Service (U.R.I.S.) provides an excellent supplement to the game system with all the latest charts, tables, and lists of trades in one place. More than once, I've found this compilation invaluable, as the *ROSAT* rules contain only a fraction of the available trades. The U.R.I.S. newsletter also includes mapping information and the names and addresses of U.R.I.S. members, facilitating communication.

In addition, Empire Games puts out its own monthly newsletter for *ROSAT*. This contains tales of adventure, rumors, and the latest new trades and rule updates. It is a very good way to keep in touch with the game system and the GMs, and the Empire people do a fine job on it. The attention given the rules updates indicates that the GMs are working to improve the system; indeed, I have seen a few notable improvements as I have played, including more realistic limits on trades and expanded ship types. The newsletter is virtually a must for serious players, and well worth the cost.

Less Than Perfect

Alas, *ROSAT* does have some bad points. Fortunately, they are pretty minor. Mapping is a sore spot; the map given covers your starting district, but if you're on the edge of a district, you have no idea what is right next door! The movement allowances permit players to travel up to seven full districts, yet traveling outside your own district is shooting in the dark. To be fair, travel outside one's own district isn't really necessary in most cases. There's plenty of adventure right near home. Also, maps are available for other districts, but Empire charges real money to print them up. It's a lot easier to deal with other players for copies of their maps.

The rulebook promises a Sighting report for the areas you pass through, and an Exploration report for the areas you explore (up to three). So far, I haven't seen anything I recognize as a Sighting report. This tends to slow exploration of the surrounding terrain.

The maps themselves are adequate, but it's best to grab your handy atlas to double-check what's water; the map is not all that clear.

The cost of *ROSAT* is rather high; $6 a turn for realms, $3 a turn for city positions. If you want to go beyond the space provided on the turns, that's another $4 for each extra page. Troop movements and other special actions involving large numbers of characters are handled with a Campaign Turn, at $1.50 a pop. All this can add up rapidly if you are ambitious and active. On the whole, however, I have used the Expanded and Campaign turns very little. The regular turn sheets have been more than adequate for my needs, as I prefer to pursue my adventures with my leader rather than with my army. If you have a yen for military conquest, the need for special turns will be great.

You'll probably want the newsletter, too. That's $12 a year. The U.R.I.S. newsletter is currently $1.50 an issue.

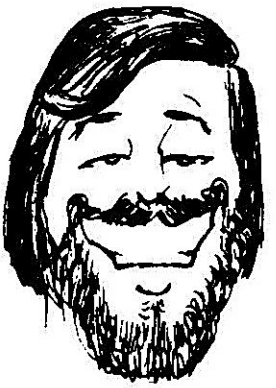
To Summarize

All in all, the rewards of *ROSAT* greatly exceed the costs, although no one should enter the game expecting it to be inexpensive. The quality of the GMing is excellent, and the creativity of the GMs elevates *ROSAT* beyond other medieval fantasy PBMs. The limitations of the game are transcended by the willingness of the GM to let players follow their own paths and implement their own ideas, no matter how crazy. Doing the unusual is more than half the fun, and in ***Realms of Sword and Thunder***, the fun just keeps coming. I unhesitatingly recommend *ROSAT* as the best fantasy PBM I've seen. □

REALMS OF SWORD AND THUNDER (Empire Games, Inc., P.O. Box 6681, Denver, CO 80206). Set-up fee $3; Realm turn $6; City turn $3; Rulebook $2.50, plus $1.50 for City Supplement Rules; Newsletter $12 per year. Human- and computer-moderated; open-ended playing time. No designer listed. Turnaround time varies.

United Realms Information Service, 1055 Remington Dr., Sunnyvale, CA 94087. Newsletter $1.50 per issue.

Where We're Going
by Steve Jackson



Last issue I promised some predictions for adventure gaming over the next couple of years. I'm almost sorry I said that; coming up with a set of reliable trends for this hobby has not been the easiest job I ever undertook. But, for what they're worth, here are my predictions for 1985 and 1986. I will be happy to argue about these at any convention, provided you first buy me a Coke to lubricate my poor, abused vocal cords.

1. Simplicity is in. I see a strong trend toward less complicated and more playable games and "gameoids." The new Milton Bradley crop, like ***Axis & Allies,*** exemplifies this. And by "gameoids," I mean items like ***Lost Worlds*** and the ***Fighting Fantasy*** series . . . they're game-like, but they're *very* simple, if not simplistic, in play.

2. Roleplaying will continue to fragment. Everywhere you turn, you see a new roleplaying system on a new subject. When you blink, it's out of print. (This is a trend that I am trying to fight with ***GURPS*** . . . but even if ***GURPS*** is successful, I don't expect it to redirect the whole hobby.) The bottom line is this: although the roleplaying boom has slowed, anybody who can afford a hack writer and a color cover can sell 10,000 copies of a RPG or supplement. If the material is any good at all, so much the better. The market has gotten just smart enough that, after three or four punk releases from the same company, sales slow down. But it seems pretty clear that there are a lot of buyers who will give *anything* new a try — or two or three tries — and this gullibility will continue to shape the market.

3. Magazines will become less common and more expensive. A game magazine is *not* a big-money proposition. To do well, you need a circulation larger than most "independents" ever achieve . . . *and* more advertising than most "house organs" can sell. The problem is very simple: *there are not enough adventure-game fans to support a healthy variety of magazines.* We have one large-circulation magazine: *Dragon.* We are not likely *ever* to see a second magazine that big, unless it specializes in computer-oriented gaming. And that will be a long time coming. (For more on this dolorous subject, see Counter Intelligence on page 2).

4. The computers are (still) coming. Text adventure games and artificial-intelligence wargame opponents are still at the very *beginning* of their development curve. You'll see some impressive developments in the next two years. And play-by-modem is still waiting on nothing more than slightly cheaper computers, slightly cheaper modems, and a year or so for software development.

5. PBM isn't going anywhere. The current leaders in the play-by-mail field are quite secure. They have a good product, a loyal audience, and a market so marginal that nobody is likely to move in on them. Don't get me wrong; I *like* PBM, and wish I had more time for it personally. But gaming by mail will never get much bigger than it is now. The demand seems to be intrinsically limited, and the modem is coming (someday . . .) to obsolete this entire field. Those PBM companies that make the jump to modem will live long and prosper, though.

6. The economy will control the hobby. I hear a lot of talk about adventure gaming being "countercyclical." The theory is this: when money is tight, people stay at home and play games more. Bat guano! A tight economy is *murder* for adventure gaming, regardless of who may or may not stay home and play games. The reasons:

(a) The publishers are small businessmen (yes, even TSR is a "small business" by real-world standards). Most are heavily dependent on bank financing to keep the presses rolling. When interest rates jump, new products (or reprints) slow to a trickle.

(b) Most retailers, and many distributors, are *very* small businesses. When your local hobby shop feels the pinch and goes slow on payments, the distributors are hurt. When distributors are hurt, publishers get hurt next. This leads to the "shakeout" effect: the publishers with the best products will get paid first (so they will keep shipping), and the ones with the slow-selling lines will go hungry. Or broke.

So, all in all, a good economy will benefit the whole game industry. A weak economy will hurt the industry, and *especially* those companies with large overhead, large debt, and slower-selling lines.

So much for predictions. Come 1987, we'll check the scorecard and see how things *really* turned out.

GURPS Progress

The game is now in playtest. As I write this, all the "basic" systems are in place except magic, which is only a few days away from its first "live" run. It's too early to say whether everything that now exists can be said to be "finished." In particular, the combat system is still complex. It's *very* realistic. But it's not yet as playable as I would like; not, in other words, a system for beginners. Of course, ***GURPS*** is not *intended* as a system for beginners. But it would be nice if a beginner could join an experienced group without getting in over his head.

We now have a projected release date, but the business staff will injure me physically if I reveal it. So I won't. But I *will* say this: *Space Gamer 75* (July/Aug) is going to be the big ***GURPS*** preview issue, including an adventure, notes for converting other games' characters into ***GURPS***, and lots more.

By the way, my thanks to everyone (over 200 at last count) who sent in the ***GURPS*** feedback cards that we ran a couple of issues ago. We're going to give it a couple of more weeks and then analyze the results. Next issue I'll report on that.

Other Stuff

Illuminati Expansion Set 3 went to the printer yesterday. By the time you read this, it *should* have been in the hobby shops for a month.

TOON is continuing to sell, and garnering *great* reviews. While we do not yet have a ***TOON*** supplement scheduled, we are still thinking seriously about it. Comments?

Scott Haring is still rolling along on ***Deluxe Car Wars***, which will likely be an Origins release. It will include material from ***Car Wars*** and the two boxed supplements — rewritten, reorganized, and slightly changed where necessary to accord with natural law — plus some new material. And ***Car Wars*** Expansion Set 7 — the off-road vehicles, track, etc. — will be out not long after that.

And we have a couple of good ***Ogre*** scenario packs already in hand, and are expecting more. No word on release date for those, though. Stay tuned. □

Multiple-Power Aliens for *Cosmic Encounter*

Allen Varney

(Reprinted by permission from ***Encounter*** *#2, Mar/Apr 1983.)*

What devoted *Cosmic Encounter* player doesn't enjoy a multiple-power game? And what player wouldn't lunge for a set of six new powers, custom-designed for multiple-alien play? Well, get ready to lunge . . .

1. Gene

You have the *power of heredity.* In a multiple-power game, when you are a main player and you win the challenge (or make a deal), you inherit one of your opponent's powers (his choice) and use it as your own from then on. If you lose the challenge (or fail to deal), you must give the Gene power to your opponent.

History: Itself only a mechanism of heredity, the Gene envies those beings which have achieved independent existence. It spitefully steals away abilities, even knowing it must inevitably pass them on to a new recipient.

2. Zephyr

You have the *power to gust.* At the start of your own challenge you may declare that you are "gusting." You pass this power to the player on your right, and each other player passes one of his powers (his choice) to the player on his right. Each player now uses the new power as his own.

History: The Zephyr delights in its mischievous psychic windstorms, which frequently waft alien intelligences into unexpected new bodies. Though this is quite a blow to its victims, it is noncorporeal and thus easily maintains its breezy manner.

3. Leech

You have the *power to leech.* You begin the game with *no* powers, except this one. When you are a main player, before the cone is pointed you take from your opponent one power of your choice, using it as your own from then on. When you reach the number of powers the other players started the game with, you then must give your opponent one of the powers you already have if you want to leech another one from him.

History: In the shallow, fetid seas of its home world, the Leech compensated for its slow start in evolution by learning to acquire the characteristics of its predators. Now it is extending its tendrils of influence in order to draw off the life-blood of the Cosmos.

4. Chameleon

You have the *power of metamorphosis.* At the start of your challenge, you may draw a new power, at random, from those not in the game, and add it to your own. But you can never have more powers to use in any one turn than you started the game with. At the beginning of each turn, you must decide which of the powers you have to select from are activated this turn. The others are turned face down, and cannot be used until you activate them in a later turn.

History: The Chameleons found their own forms so loathsome that they developed their shapeshifting powers in self-defense. Constantly broadening their range, they hope to encompass all possible forms, not only ruling the Cosmos but impersonating it.

5. Sponge

You have the *power to absorb.* When your bases in your home system are occupied by opponents in a successful challenge, your tokens do not go to the Warp but instead remain on the planet with the attackers. Conversely, when you establish a new base, defending tokens there are not removed to the Warp but coexist with you.

History: Believing in peaceful coexistence with other life-forms, the Sponge nevertheless wishes to soak up the entire Cosmos in its immortal structure and wring from it every drop of experience.

DO NOT USE WITH THE FILTH.

6. Zapper

You have the *power of nullification.* You start the game with one "zap point." As a main player or ally, when you win a challenge or deal, you lose a point; when you lose a challenge or fail to deal, you get a point. You can spend your points to Zap another player's power(s), one point per Zap. If you are Zapped you still keep the point you were going to spend.

History: A hive-mind that depends for survival on absolute order, the Zapper competes for Cosmic domination on the condition that everyone "plays by the rules." Of all the life-forms in the universe, it is the least fun at parties. □

Capsule Reviews

Space Gamer reviews boardgames, roleplaying games, computer games, play aids, publications, and game supplements. We review play-by-mail games if a reviewer is enrolled. We will attempt to review any science fiction or fantasy game if the publisher supplies a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical games. *Space Gamer* may publish a review of a game we are not sent — *if* a reader submits a review.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games and game items for which we are seeking reviews include ***Battlebikes, Clash of Kings, Cleopatra Gambit, Crasimoff's World*** (PBM), ***Encyclopedia Harnica 3-10, First Light*** (PBM), ***Goodbye Kankee, The Iron Wind, Isle of the Dead, The Last Starfighter Combat Game, The Last Starfighter: Duel in Space, Margin of Profit, Monsters of Myth & Legend, Moria, Offworld*** (PBM), ***Partisans From the Shadows, Queen's Park Affair, RHAND, The Romulans, Sea Dogs of England, Sologames, Star Ace, Star Trek III Starship Combat Game, Vengeance of Dracula***, and ***Witchlord.***

GAMES

THE ADVENTURES OF INDIANA JONES (TSR, Inc.); $13.95. Designed by David Cook. One 64-page booklet, one 8-page Evidence Folder, 4 pages of 3-D cutout figures and backdrops, a World Map, and a Referee's Screen. For two to eight players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

TSR brings us its newest roleplaying game, based on the popular Indiana Jones movies. Characters are chosen from Jones and his compatriates (the exact ones available depending on the particular scenario), and then proceed on an adventure to recover some rare artifact, explore a deserted city deep in the Amazon jungle, etc. Rules are given for both ranged and hand-to-hand combat, as well as chase sequences, NPC interaction, and information on how to set up adventures. Cardboard stand-up figures provide a diorama to indicate relative positions and help visualize the encounters.

Indiana Jones provides a wide background of information on archaelogical sites of "bizarre" repute, a map with travel times and scales, and 3-D backdrops that could be used for a dungeon. The chase rules are more than adequate, and a flow chart is provided for a chase through the streets of almost any city. The chase rules could easily be combined with a game such as ***Top Secret.***

That about covers the good points. ***Indiana Jones*** *cannot* be considered what is commonly thought of as a roleplaying game. It is unique in that there is *no* character generation system provided. No backgrounds are given for the characters, so participants have to make it up from what they can get out of the movies. A gamemaster cannot afford to let a character be killed off, especially Indiana Jones; this tends to take a certain "edge" off of the game. TSR's first effort at a critical hit/miss system is poor: The effects of both are vaguely described, with exact effects left up to the gamemaster. And finally, the scenario included, ***The Ikons of Ikammanen***, is a direct ripoff from the first two issues of Marvel's *Indiana Jones* comic book, right down to the NPC dialogue. The scenario is adequate, but its lack of originality implies a sort of "cheapness" on TSR's part.

Indiana Jones is so locked into the concept of the two movies that it is practically useless for anything outside of reenacting the movies or similar plots. FGU's ***Daredevils*** and Hero Games' ***Justice Inc.*** both take a broader look at the genre of 30s roleplaying, giving you a chance to take your life into your own hands with characters of your own creation. ***Indiana Jones*** does neither.

-Steve Crow

CHAMPIONS, Third Edition (Hero Games); $15. Designed by George MacDonald and Steve Peterson; third edition rules editing by Steve Peterson. Illustrated by Mike Witherby, Denis Loubet, Mark Williams, and Pat Zircher. Superhero roleplaying game. 96-page rulebook, 48-page Campaign Book, 17" x 22" mapsheet, six dice, boxed. For three or more players; playing time indefinite. Revised edition published January 1985.

In this third edition of the well-known superhero RPG, Hero Games has basically redone the game in ***Justice Inc.*** format: rules are in one book, campaign advice and adventures in another; the text has been reorganized and rewritten in a chatty, nonthreatening style; production values have been upgraded substantially. The only changes in the rules are slight alterations in the Growth, Shrinking, and Teleportation powers, a few little rules additions here and there, and expanded explanations for . . . well, nearly everything.

The improvement in presentation makes ***Champions*** a professional product — finally. The copy is typeset. Some thought has been given to layout and graphics. The introductory solo adventure, though trivial, does help the novice grasp the sometimes involved mechanics of combat in the Hero System. The super-types in the back of the Campaign Book are now given both hero and villain options; if you don't want to create your own hero right away, these former villains can be drafted into your own personal war against evil. The new character sheet is impressive.

It would be grossly unfair not to mention the artwork. I have criticized Hero's artwork incessantly in the past; I'd like to leaven that criticism with admiration for Hero's efforts to improve it. Some of the illustrations here (those by Denis Loubet) are very good. Pat Zircher's spot art is usually adequate. In the spirit of constructive assessment I might observe that Mike Witherby (who also illustrated Hero's recent ***Enemies III*** supplement) appears to know only one male figure (grotesquely musclebound), one female figure (bulbous), and four facial expressions (smile, scowl, grimace, yodel). Say, Heroes, if you're providing eight different character sheet outlines for players to customize into different heroes, why did you have Mr. Witherby draw the *same* two figures in four different poses each? If my character isn't musclebound or bulbous, I'm out of luck.

I imagine most *SG* readers have already either bought ***Champions*** or decided not to. If you're still debating, though, ***Champions*** is the only superhero RPG I would recommend; and this edition of ***Champions*** is the one to buy.

—Allen Varney

SUPER SQUADRON (Adventure Simulations); $15. Designed by Joseph Italiano. One 8½" x 11" 56-page rulebook, 24-page adventure book, 4 pages of character silhouettes, boxed. For GM and two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Super Squadron is Australia's entry into the superhero RPG field and is a pretty impressive showing. Subtitled "The Complete Superhero Role-Playing Game System," ***Super Squadron*** comes mighty close to fulfilling that claim. It is somewhat reminiscent of the original edition of ***Villains and Vigilantes***, but is even more complete in most of what it covers than 2nd edition *V&V*. Like *V&V*, ***Super Squadron*** uses a random system for determining a character's powers and abilities (though with the provision that the GM may allow a player to choose his powers and origins if he wishes). Characters roll for origin type — Mutants, Self-developed, Supernatural, Alien, etc. — and then roll up powers on various tables, based on their origins. The number of powers received is based on a percentile roll, modified by luck, with extra powers allowed for each defect or weakness the character will accept. Characteristics are rolled up on a D20 (with re-rolls allowed if the scores of the first five of seven don't come up to a total of 60 points), except for Luck, which has a 10% chance of ranging from 1-10 and a 90% chance of being 0, and Public Standing, which starts at 11. Combat is percentile-oriented, with a base chance to hit of 30% modified by various factors, such as luck, expertise, and target status. The rules include *very* complete power descriptions, encounter tables for patrolling, guidelines on PC/NPC interactions, and bonuses such as gadget and spell lists for gadget-wielding and supernatural characters. The adventure book provides a well-crafted linked campaign that aids players in learning the game.

Super Squadron's power descriptions are among the game's best points. Unlike some descriptions in *V&V* and other hero RPGs, where some powers are left up to GM and player to figure out, *SS* gives complete guidelines and even examples. The Batman and Green Arrow types have actual gadget lists and descriptions to choose from, and the Dr. Stranges have actual spells — not simply regular powers designated as such. Other nice options not available in other games include the opportunity to play an intelligent, super-powered artifact, with an NPC host, and rules on romance, marriage, and children for heroes. Also, the rules are written to allow players to portray supervillains, a possibility glossed over in many games.

Among the few things missing in ***Super Squadron*** are complete guidelines for designing and using super-powered vehicles, although "Vehicle" is a possible power. Differentiated animal lists are missing also, though basic guidelines for animals are given under the Pet power description. And "normal" skills are treated briefly in an appendix: while characters can be newspaper reporters in their secret identities, there is no Journalism skill, for example. Other than these, the only other real problem

Feudal Lords

The original medieval pbm game of economic development, military conquest, and political intrigue.

Feudal Lords is a computer-moderated play-by-mail strategic game of power politics set in Arthurian England.

Each player is the lord of a medieval fiefdom seeking to become King against up to 14 other players and over 30 non-player lords controlled by the computer. To accomplish this task, a player may select from over 30 types of military, economic, and diplomatic orders each turn.

— The game is processed entirely by computer for fast, accurate, and impartial results.

— A two-page computer printout details each turn's economic results and reports all major battles fought.

— Armies may move by land or sea, limited only by the extent of their lord's political influence.

— Other features include random events, spies, vassals, trading, mercenaries, and more.

— Rated one of the four best pbm games as reviewed in issue #72 of the ***Dragon*** *magazine!*

GRAAF SIMULATIONS
27530 Harper
St. Clair Shores, MI 48081

ENTRY: $10.00 for the rulebook, set-up, and first 3 turns; $2.50 per turn.
RULEBOOK only: $2.50 S

is an annoying lack of agreement between nouns and pronouns throughout the text.

If you have no qualms about random power generation (usually more true to the comics than designing your own, really), ***Super Squadron*** is definitely a game you should check out. Even if you don't wish to switch from ***Champions, Superworld,*** or ***V&V***, ***SS*** has a *lot* of source material (especially for ***V&V***) you'll find useful.

—William A. Barton

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA (FASA); $12. Designed by Jordan Weisman. 24-page rulebook, three 17" x 22" maps, 78 counters, pad of 20 plotting sheets, two 6-sided dice, boxed. For two or more players; playing time anywhere from 15 minutes to 4 hours. Published 1984.

Battlestar Galactica, based on the TV series, is a wargame of starfighter combat, where the players man their Vipers and Raiders and engage in mortal combat. The play can range from single fighter combats to massive engagements of rival groups to assaults on a Cylon Base Ship or even the Battlestar Galactica! The rules illustrate the use of the plotting sheets to move your fighter; beware of running out of fuel, either through careless maneuvering or battle damage! The damage done when you're hit is noted on the plotting sheet, with the effects obvious and debilitating: The more hits you take, the worse your firing, the slower you go, etc. And if the enemy gets a lucky hit, you replace your fighter with the pretty explosion/fire counters included in the game. If your pilots survive enough battles and score enough kills, optional rules allow them to get better at their business (watch out for aces!).

Battlestar Galactica is similar to FASA's ***Star Fleet Combat Simulator*** in the quality of game components. The counters are works of art, all of them. The fire/explosion counters are particularly dazzling. The three mapsheets are standard star-speckled hex maps, with two of the maps showing the Base Ship and the Battlestar, respectively (for the mass assault game). The rules are easy to understand, and well-explained (as the game says, ages 12 and up. Given the ease of the rules, I'd say perhaps 10 and up). There's nothing really spectacularly different about the system, but it is well-executed.

However, the game has its faults. Some *Galactica* fans may take umbrage at the liberties taken: Each side has three different marks of fighter, which carry differing armaments of lasers and torpedoes (I can hear it now: "Torpedoes! They never used those in the show!!"). Torps are necessary to destroy Base ships; lasers won't do it. I found the plotting sheets to have too much extraneous art on them, and not enough room for actual plotting! Believe me, the mass assault or campaign games (featuring 18 fighters per side, each of which is plotted individually) turn into long affairs. However, the biggest problem may have been a misprint. In the Weapons section a monster called the "Photon Missile" is mentioned. It is only mentioned at one other place in the game; never is there a complete description. Could this be the equivalent of the mega-pulsars that the Base Star carries?

Battlestar Galactica lives up to its subtitle: "A game of starfighter combat." If you love *Galactica*, or Vipers, this game is for you. Don't expect to be able to slug it out Battlestar to Base Ship, though. Maybe FASA will bring out a system for that someday . . . and tell us what the Photon Missile is.

—Craig Sheeley

PYRAMID (Independent Card League, 4806 So. 15th Street, Omaha, NE 68107); $5 + 50¢ postage. Designed by Karl Rasmussen. 55 hexagonal playing cards, 5½" x 8½" rulesheet, plastic container (petri dish). For two to four players; playing time approximately five minutes per hand. Published 1984.

Pyramid is a simple card game like draw poker, where players are dealt a hand of six cards and one additional draw of up to four cards, trying to get the best hand possible. It is patterned after the card game by the same name played on the old series, *Battlestar Galactica*.

Pyramid plays very much like poker, using a ranking system consisting of "Pyramid levels" and suit colors to classify the various hand combinations. The card graphics are pleasing to the eye and very functional. Play is fast and enjoyable (again, if you like poker).

The biggest problem I found with ***Pyramid*** is that the cards are hexagon-shaped, which makes for awkward shuffling. Also, there is no mention made of betting or gambling. Since there is nothing at stake, there is very little excitement. To remedy this situation, perhaps a small wagering system should be worked in. (After all, they did on the television show — why not at home?) Our group found it particularly interesting when we bet our paychecks on the outcome (and since I only write capsule game reviews, I had the least to lose).

All in all, ***Pyramid*** is a fun little game when there is little else going on. Poker fanatics will find it entertaining, though others may discover themselves growing bored after only a few hands.

—Jerry Epperson

PASSAGE TO CATHAY (Ragnarok Enterprises); $5.95. Designed by Eric Olson. 12-page 5½" x 8½" rule booklet, 2 8½" x 11" mapsheets, 96 ship markers, 8½" x 11" Ship Record Sheet, and zip-lock bag. For two to six players; playing time two to five hours. Published 1984.

Passage to Cathay is a boardgame of sea traders and privateers in the Indian Ocean during the years 1680 to 1830. Players represent shipping companies in operation from the African continent to the islands of Japan. Each player starts the game with

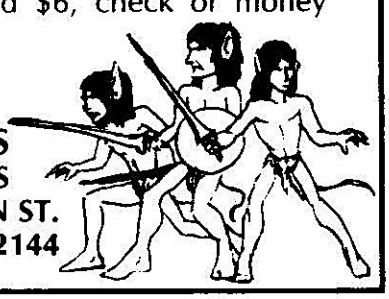
MYRMIDONS

Copyright 1984 A.L.F.A. Games

A new play-by-mail game of fantasy where you control the growth and expansion of an army of different types of Myrmidons (like Dwelflings, Reptazans, Empaths, & more), on missions of exploration and adventure on an island of jungles, ruins, and undiscovered treasures. There are no turn deadlines in Myrmidons, and each turn costs only $2.

For a rules book, set-up and your first three turns, send $6, check or money order to:

MYRMIDONS
A.L.F.A. GAMES
462 WASHINGTON ST.
RENSSELAER, NY 12144



$100,000, which is used to build ships to personal specifications. The first player to accumulate cash, ships, and trade goods worth $600,000 is the winner.

Passage to Cathay is easy to learn and fast-playing, and the player interaction is excellent as everyone works for the almighty buck. Winning involves a lot of advance planning and even a little diplomacy. The game is well-suited to postal play and can be linked with its sister game, *Middle Passage*, for an even better game.

If *Passage to Cathay* has a problem, it is the imbalance between pirates and merchants. The abstract combat system, while suitable for what is supposed to be a trading game, allows plundering with little, if any, retribution. During one game, all of the players except one decided to become pirates. They took turns sacking port after port until a winner was determined (the merchant, though he played great, finished dead last, the victim of attrition). This is the same problem that *Middle Passage* (also published by Ragnarok) has: Pirating is much too profitable. Though the rules for *Passage to Cathay* correct many of the flaws found in its predecessor, unfortunately, nothing was done to correct this imbalance.

If you are tired of boardgames that place too much emphasis upon luck, or are searching for something that is *fun* to play, *Passage to Cathay* is the game you've been waiting for. Don't be fooled by the inexpensive packaging and the "construction paper" counters; this game is worth its weight in gold (which, at the current rate, gives it a value of around $470.61. Hmmm, would you believe silver?).

—Jerry Epperson

THE MYSTIC WOOD (The Avalon Hill Game Company); $11. Designed by Terence Donnelly. 45 4" x 6" map cards, 5 knight cards, 35 denizen and spell cards, 14-page rulebook, 4 pawns, 2 dice. For two to four players; playing time 30-45 minutes. Published 1983.

The Mystic Wood, The Avalon Hill Game Company's entry into the medium-priced fantasy game market, recreates familiar characters and events from the age of chivalry. Knights with a given strength, prowess, and personal quest journey through earthly and enchanted woods seeking adventure and glory; Percival must find the Holy Grail; George must kill the dragon. The first to fulfill his quest and leave the woods wins. The mechanics of the game are similar to the roleplaying board game *Magic Realm*, although *The Mystic Wood* is much simpler. Both have characters who can increase their trait values and acquire possessions and companions; both have modular boards. Spell cards change orientation of certain tiles, or transport knights or their possessions to the other half of the wood. Players can joust to gain a card or companion from a fellow knight or to banish the loser to "the tower."

The game components are of the expected Avalon Hill quality. The map cards which form the modular board are the major strength of this game. Some map cards have only three exits, and their random placement generates a different maze for each game. The artwork on the denizen (event) cards is pleasant. They add variety to repeated plays and they represent both the denizen and the object, strength, or prowess which the knight can gain from an encounter.

This is a simple, luck-based game. Bad rolls or delayed revealing of the card needed for a quest can give an opponent an easy win. The rules are clear, but exceptions for specific characters and denizens are easily missed. The large board (36" x 30") is cumbersome and the game would not suffer if it were half as large.

The Mystic Wood is a good beer-and-pretzels game, ideal for finishing off an evening of long games. It is *not* good solitaire. If you enjoy *Dungeon!* or *The Castle*, buy this one; it is the best of the three.

—Steve Condit

SUPPLEMENTS

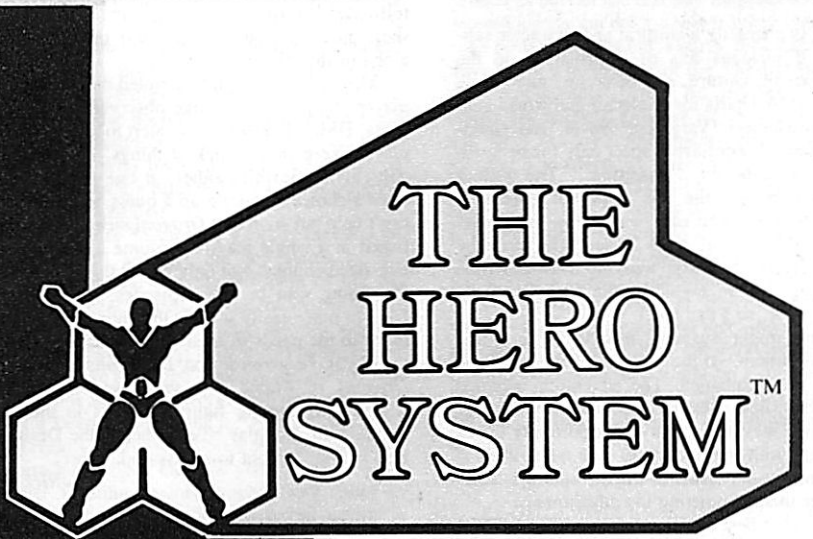
ATLAS OF THE IMPERIUM (GDW); $6. Designed by Marc Miller. Supplement for *Traveller*. 39-page 8½" x 11" book. Published 1984.

Atlas of the Imperium, the all-encompassing star-chart of the Third Imperium and its neighboring sections, has finally hit the shelves. Representing the work of decades, the Imperial Scout Service atlas shows the location of every inhabited system within the Imperium, and hundreds, nay, *thousands* of systems outside the Imperium's borders. The sectors, each measuring 40 by 32 parsecs, take a page apiece; they illustrate the location and general navigation features (bases, ports, fuel availability, and high-population worlds) of each system.

Atlas of the Imperium features several areas of GDW's known space that *Traveller* players will be familiar with: the Spinward Marches, the Solomani Rim, Old Expanses, Reavers' Deep, Dark Nebula, etc. It's nice to see where they all join up; with the *Atlas*, it's possible to go from the Spinward Marches to the Solomani Rim, and beyond.

Normally, I have trouble finding more than minor problems with GDW fare. This time, I hardly know where to start. How about the map format? In the past, *Traveller* mapping had always been done on a hex-grid. Why, then, are all the sectors in *Atlas of the Imperium* in a staggered-box array? It looks like a poor computer printout! The planets are not named unless they are extremely high-population systems, which are a very small percentage of

The ***Hero System*** is more than ***Champions***—it's an interlocking system of games, adventures, source-books and player aids that work together to form an action-packed playing environment. Two-fisted ***Justice Inc.*** adventurers can battle evil side by side with ***Champions*** super heroes in the modern world of ***Danger International.*** The compatibility doesn't stop there: ***Hero System*** adventures include game statistics for *Call of Cthulhu, Daredevils, Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes* and other popular systems if you haven't started playing ***Hero System*** games yet! The ***Hero System*** even has a special magazine: the ***Adventurers Club.*** Get your gaming products at the ***Hero System Headquarters*** today.



For FREE CATALOGUE write to:
HERO GAMES • 92A 21st Ave. • San Mateo • CA • 94403

the total; GDW certainly didn't have trouble finding space for the names with the old, reliable hex format. Moreover, this staggered-square format does not allow for xboat routes and trade lines, central features of the old format. It's very difficult to find anything on the square format. If you look at it too long, the eyes begin to water and the squares shift and dance like an optical illusion.

Of course, the biggest problem is that not one system includes game statistics. Without the game stats, the entire atlas becomes a useless collection of 35 pages of little squares with marks in them. Merely to generate these marks, the game facts had to be worked out (probably on a computer); why didn't GDW double the size of the book, raise the price, and publish it thus? Rumors hold that GDW intends to publish another part of the atlas, filled with the game material.

Atlas of the Imperium is a major disappointment. Unless the game stats for the systems presented in this supplement are published, you may as well populate the Imperium yourself and save the money.

—Craig Sheeley

VARGR, ALIEN MODULE 3 (Game Designers' Workshop); $6. Designed by J. Andrew Keith, Marc Miller, and John Harshman. Supplement for ***Traveller***. 47-page 8½" x 11" book. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

GDW continues to expand the exhaustive campaign setting of its limitless Imperium with a third major alien race: ***Vargr***, "free-booting encounter with the wolves of space." The subtitle is very appropriate, for the Vargr are a race of genetically altered wolves, their forbears taken from Earth in the distant past and transported to a world of their own. Left to their own devices, they developed a very alien culture and finally developed star-drive, earning the Vargr a place among the great races of space.

Vargr is primarily a cultural and character supplement; it includes lots of information on the Vargr's society, culture, and behavior, along with the usual GDW charts for character and world generation, encounters, Vargr star travel, and equipment sections. Vargr have respect only for personal presence or authority, "charisma." The further away this presence, the less respect it generates. Leaders are those who can sway the most popular opinion; military units must be led into battle by popular officers; the Vargr with the most charisma is "top dog." (Pun intended; the authors of the module used it, so I can too.)

As you might suspect, this is difficult for humans to fathom, so the process of the charisma contest is well-explained. The adventure included takes players on a quest through a sector of Vargr space, where they have plenty of opportunity to see and interact with Vargr culture. The quest itself is rather thin, but the thrust of the adventure is roleplay rather than completing the adventure.

Vargr is the best alien module put out by GDW so far. The Vargr are not the most alien of the major races — far from it! — but they are the best explained. The designers felt that the Vargr should not be played like humans in wolf suits, so they added the charisma system and a wonderful section of referee's notes on how to play, game, and referee the Vargr. (Special thanks to J. Andrew Keith.)

As rich as ***Vargr*** is, some of the information is hard to get to: No index is provided, and the game information charts are stuck right in the middle of the book, interrupting the text. I admit that putting the players' handouts in the middle makes sense: a little work with a pry-tool and the handouts lift right out, but the charts aren't arranged in the same way; to take them out would put them in the wrong order. And they ***are*** a nuisance in the center of the book. I can't see why these charts couldn't have been put in the back of the book.

Vargr will get a lot of use in a ***Traveller*** campaign; a lot of players would find them interesting characters. (They treat government as a source of benefits, and follow laws when it suits their purposes, or when enforced — sounds like the players *I* know!) Even if you don't like the "official" Imperium campaign, buy ***Vargr***; it'll enliven any ***Traveller*** campaign.

—Craig Sheeley

DRAGONS OF FLAME (TSR, Inc.); $6. Designed by Douglas Niles. ***Dragonlance*** adventure module for ***Dungeons & Dragons***. 32-page book, 11" x 14" foldout map. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Fantasy roleplaying takes a leap forward with the publication of TSR's ***Dragonlance*** epic, a new series of ***Dungeons & Dragons*** modules with the scope and depth of a richly-written novel. Set in the distressed world of Krynn after the great Cataclysm which all but ended a once-mighty society, ***Dragonlance*** is the story of the quest for the lost knowledge of the True Gods and the ultimate redemption of their civilization. ***Dragons of Flame*** is an early entry in the series and introduces the players to several of the basic ***Dragonlance*** concepts and characters, climaxing with a hair-raising rescue from a prison in a mysterious area known as Pax Tharkus. Although it's a single episode in what promises to be a lengthy series, ***Dragons of Flame*** is complete and playable by itself.

Niles shines from start to finish. The characters are vivid without lapsing into stereotypes, the encounters are challenging and engaging, and best of all, the storyline shows the touch of a true craftsman. The plot is complex without being burdened with trivia; needless detail is jettisoned when it gets in the way of the action. Extra touches abound, including a sheet of cut-out statistic cards for NPCs, a full-color "mosaic area" map, and a page of real sheet music so you can lead your group in a sing-along of the "Elven Hymn."

The story is so tightly scripted that occasionally players may feel more like observers than participants; DMs will need to stay alert to make sure their players keep in the thick of things. The story isn't particularly flexible, either; at one point, the PCs have a choice of taking up a quest or dying! I also can't help but wish that ***Dragonlance*** had been published in a single massive volume instead of these bite-sized chunks. Not only would this eliminate the frustrating wait between episodes, it would allow DMs to more easily modify the entirety of ***Dragonlance*** to the needs of their own groups.

If you've given up on ***Dungeons & Dragons***, ***Dragons of Flame*** is a great way to get reacquainted. Assuming future modules in the series measure up, Douglas Niles' place in the Designer's Hall of Fame ought to be assured. More!

—Rick Swan

CONAN UNCHAINED (TSR, Inc.); $6. Designed by David Cook. Adventure module for ***Dungeons & Dragons***. 32-page book, 11" x 24" foldout map. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that in the wake of the Indiana Jones and Marvel Comics products, here we go again with the next installment of TSR's latest marketing ploy to reel in the gullible — right? Well, sort of. Arnold What's-his-name's mug isn't plastered across the front by coincidence, but this isn't all bad. Designer David Cook has taken what is in essence a pretty cheesy assignment and given it a good shot. Realizing that Conan and his world don't readily fit into the ***D&D*** universe, Cook fudges the system by adding some new rules. These include a "Fear Factor" assigned to monsters to inspire terror in the weak-willed, "Luck Points" to allow characters to perform spectacular feats of heroism, and a new healing rule that mends wounded characters faster than normal. ***D&D*** purists may balk, but the rules work and add to the heroic feel of the setting. Fans of R.E. Howard will be happy to know that Cook has approached the source material with considerable respect and that ***Conan Unchained*** is generally consistent with the Hyborian world we all know and love.

The basic problem here is that Conan isn't a particularly good choice for the ***D&D*** system. Compared to most ***D&D*** settings, Conan's world is pretty barren. There's no magic or interesting monsters to speak of, and the adventure is nothing special (the characters are captured by slavers, negotiate their freedom, and rescue a fair maiden from a nasty castle). It would have been nice if Cook had included a way to settle the argument as to which player is going to be Conan — honestly now, who would *you* want to play? And I know that Conan is supposed to be a tough guy, but a ***hundred*** hit points? And why is this module so skimpy? With only 32 pages to start with, a good eight of them are given over to useless illustrations or redundant information, including four pages of character statistics that are already given on the inside cover.

Conan Unchained can be played as part of a regular ***D&D*** campaign without Conan and associates, but what's the point? There are plenty of better roleplaying modules available from TSR and elsewhere. Conan and ***D&D*** go together like peanut butter and tuna fish — it can be done, but you can bet there's going to be a funny taste.

—Rick Swan

MORDENKAINEN'S FANTASTIC ADVENTURE (TSR, Inc.); $6. Designed by J. Kuntz and Gary Gygax. "World of Greyhawk" module for ***Dungeons & Dragons***. 32-page book, 11" x 24" foldout map. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

As roleplaying becomes more sophisticated, those early days of ***Dungeons & Dragons*** seem long ago indeed. The once-fascinating attraction of assuming the identity of a mighty warrior or magician purely to explore a creature-filled dungeon in search of treasure now seems hopelessy quaint to today's experienced roleplayer. I'd venture a guess that Gary Gygax's cheerful admission in the preface to ***Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure*** that "this is what is generally termed a hack-and-slash" module will send many roleplayers running for the hills.

Well, you may have no use for this kind of stuff, but it wasn't ***that*** long ago when we were ***all*** novices. About a year ago, I introduced my eight-year-old cousin to roleplaying by way of a couple of early ***D&D*** modules not unlike this one (which, incidentally, is one of the "World of Greyhawk" series, consisting of a three-level dungeon filled to the brim with monsters, traps, and treasures, unmuddled by any semblance of "plot"). The kid became so caught up in these games that he soon decided he'd rather play ***D&D*** than do anything else — including eating, sleeping, and going to school (his mother straightened him out about this). Needless to say, ***Mordenkainen*** is right up his swashbuckling alley. With dozens of rooms to explore and surprises in every one, action is non-stop and there's no chance for your attention to wander. Regardless of how you feel about Gygax's everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach to module design, you've got to admit he's got it down cold. The module is a breeze to run and can accommodate any element you wish to add or subtract. Hack-and-slashers don't come any slicker than this.

Mordenkainen is intended for character levels 9-12, but here I think Gygax's aim is a little off. Veteran players who have clawed their way up to a

level that high will probably have had their fill of hack-and-slash. Low level characters, on the other hand, are unlikely to stagger past the first few encounters — this is a dangerous place. Starting a new player on the 10th level or so is contrary to the spirit of the game, so a DM will have to do some fancy juggling to keep a group of rookies alive.

Unless thinking gives you a headache or you're just in the mood to show off, ***Mordenkainen*** has little to offer experienced ***D&D*** players. But scaled down to less deadly proportions, it's roleplaying heaven for a newcomer. Try it as an enticement for young recruits; you just might make a pal or two for life.

—Rick Swan

ENEMIES III (Hero Games); $6. By Andrew Robinson, David Berge, Dennis Mallonee, and others; illustrated by Mike Witherby. Supplement to ***Champions***. 32-page 8½" x 11" book. Published December 1984.

Twenty-seven super-villains for ***Champions:*** Starseer, Cryotron and the Corruptors of All, Jabberrock, Stronghammer the Dwarf, Aerion, Red Rapier (the fellow in the ***Enemies III*** ad in ***SG***), The Amazing Darkon, and others. Complete index of ***Champions*** villains.

Much-improved graphic presentation. Wide variety of villains — megadeath killers, thugs, comic relief, change-of-pace, standard issue. Origins of villains usually quite original; look fun to roleplay. Each entry includes costume notes for the fashion-conscious.

Some embarrassing production errors — overpastes, typos, a scrambled contents page. Art by Mike Witherby looks rushed; Mr. Witherby apparently learned human anatomy from muscle magazines. *Very* peculiar disadvantages in some entries: Dark Seraph gets 15 points for "glorying in destruction," while Bruiser "likes cute things" (5 points). "Likes fiddling with mechanisms." "Aggressively proud of being Canadian." "Uses aggression to assuage" (get this) "inner torment." These are supposed to make life difficult?

What's to say, really, about an ***Enemies*** supplement? Either you want it or you don't. This is a pretty good job.

—Allen Varney

DAREDEVIL ADVENTURES, VOL. 2, NO. 3 — SUPERNATURAL THRILLERS ISSUE (Fantasy Games Unlimited); $5. Designed by T.A. Dowd, R.N. Charette, and Kenneth Campbell. One 8½" x 11" 24-page book. Published 1984.

The third anthology of adventures for FGU's ***Daredevils*** '30s pulp RPG, ***Daredevil Adventures, Vol. 2, No. 3 — Supernatural Thrillers Issue,*** could almost be subtitled "The Daredevils meet Cthulhu," for at least one of its three scenarios has a very Lovecraftian feel to it. Three creepy adventures face the Daredevils in this one: "The Body Vanishes," by T.A. Dowd and ***Daredevils*** co-designer Bob Charette, concerns the disappearance of a corpse from the city morgue — a cadaver that could prove a bit livelier than most characters might like . . . Dowd's "The Forgotten Manuscript," the longest scenario in the book, is replete with Lovecraftian trappings — a lost manuscript containing secrets of evil lore, an eons-old malevolent entity scheming to gain control of mankind, hidden subterranean caverns, and monstrous minions ready to foil the attempts of Our Heroes to combat the ancient evil! The final and shortest scenario, Kenneth Campbell's "The Case of Miss Brookmeyer's Murderer," poses a psychological mystery for '30s investigators. Each scenario provides lists of major NPCs with complete descriptions and ***Daredevils*** game stats, important clues, and maps and interior plans of key locations.

Of the book's three situations, "Manuscript" is by far the most interesting (and the most in keeping with the book's theme). It is an excellent example of a "non-Lovecraftian Lovecraft story" — so much so that it could be converted to a ***Call of Cthulhu*** scenario with little trouble. I suspect Dowd intended this as a tribute to Lovecraft, as it is filled with Lovecraftian "buzz" names — NPCs with monikers such as Blake, Ramsey, Angell, and even Phillips! Players expecting an "ordinary" '30s-type adventure will really get a few surprises in this one.

"Miss Brookmeyer's Murderer" was the least interesting of this book's offerings to me (and of any of the published ***Daredevils*** scenarios so far released, in fact). It is too short and seems relatively undeveloped, especially in comparison to the others in the book. Its solution was somewhat too predictable for my taste, too. Gamers more fond of natural than supernatural causes behind their mysteries might find it more to their liking.

Those who enjoy a touch of the occult in their pulp adventures should find ***Daredevil Adventures, Vol. 2, No. 3 — Supernatural Thrillers Issue*** a welcome addition to their gaming repertoire.

—William A. Barton

THE HORRIBLE SECRET OF MONHEGAN ISLAND (Grenadier Models Inc.); $7. By Gary Pilkington. 48-page scenario booklet, containing two scenarios for use with ***Call of Cthulhu***. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

This is one of the first modules released by Grenadier Models. It contains two adventures, ***The Horrible Secret of Monhegan Island*** and ***The House in the Woods*** (a scenario for beginners).

(SPOILER WARNING: In the next paragraph Matt Costello gives away ***The Horrible Secret of Monhegan Island****. If you intend to play this adventure, skip the next paragraph or all the hideous unspeakable surprises will be spoiled. —The Editors)*

The Horrible Secret is that the Monhegan Islanders have been sacrificing nubile "Sea Nerieds" (sic) to Father Dagon and Mother Hydra, the rulers of those horrors from the sea, the Deep Ones. Roger Martinson, a descendent of the original Martinson who founded the island colony in 1692, carries out the bizarre rituals to insure good fishing for the islanders.

The adventure features a good re-creation of "closed" island society: the icy stares of the unfriendly islanders, and the whispers of the sea breeze in the beach grass. An adequate history of the island is provided, including information and stats for the islanders who inhabit it. The maps and illustrations have a "rough" quality — a quality that seems, in this setting, to work. One of the illustrations of a Deep One hoisting a "Neried" (by Flint Henry) recalls EC horror comics at their lurid best. There are many floor maps so you can move your Grenadier Cthulhu figures around from room to room. A helpful time-line is provided as well as a listing of all the available occult books.

The scenario itself is, if anything, too short. I like the detailed map pages, but I don't think that full-page stats for pre-rolled characters are necessary. The presence of typos indicates that another round of proofreading would have been beneficial.

The House in the Woods, the beginning scenario, is just that, and a welcome one too. With a sanatorium, Mi-Go footprints, and an old root cellar to explore, this adventure offers an evening's *divertissement* for novices.

This module is not nearly as complex as many of the Cthulhu scenarios available, yet it has its share of surprises and horror. Think of this one as a chilling "B" movie from the fifties. While it lacks some polish, it's an interesting debut for Grenadier.

—Matthew J. Costello

DEATH IN DUNWICH (Theatre of the Mind Enterprises); $8. Written by Ed Wimble. Adventure for Chaosium's ***Call of Cthulhu***. 8½" x 11" 36-page book plus glossy cover. Keeper's screen in center, and envelope with information "for Keepers only." For Keeper and an indefinite number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

This adventure begins as a murder mystery. Players are told that an art dealer was found mutilated in the town of Dunwich (yes, of "the Dunwich Horror"). Along the way, the players discover some intriguing news stories and other information and prepare for a final confrontation with the unknown! My group played it in a day without missing much or dwelling too long anywhere.

Death in Dunwich is fairly well laid out, and has a solid background. The suspense builds well: As players get more information, they slowly form an idea of what is really going on . . . but aren't sure whether to believe their own frightening theories! The scenario involves much information gathering, making it a change of pace from "standard" ***Cthulhu*** scenarios which have more combat and occult goings-on (not that this one lacks these — the players will come upon some *weird* stuff). It is also a race against time; the investigators have a week to solve the case. To help the Keeper keep track of time, there is a table of travel times between cities on the screen, which also has a mediocre map of Dunwich. There is a smaller mystery contained in the adventure which may sidetrack characters, costing them time (but benefitting them in other ways, if this supplement is used as part of a larger campaign).

Unfortunately, most of this scenario's background is hidden from the players, so from the point of view of this adventure, it is wasted space. Second, the illustrations are not good. (One player thought that the skeleton on the cover was wearing sunglasses!) There are numerous newspaper articles printed as part of the text that must be xeroxed and inconveniently cut out to show players; these should have been better laid out. Fourth, the module should have given a better idea of the size and strength of the recommended party: An interior illustration shows six investigators, so we used that many — and they destroyed the enemy almost without a scratch! The adventure involves certain vital pieces of information that make all the difference between success and failure. There is probably nothing inherently wrong with this. More serious is a possible action the party could take which would draw the scenario to a boring close very early on.

I recommend ***Death in Dunwich*** for players with a bit of experience and tact who are ready to concentrate on a murder mystery instead of the Cthulhu mythos. There might be a problem if you feel $8 is too much for one day of play, but you do get background material as well as the adventure itself.

—Russ Williams

CLOUDLAND (Grenadier); $7. Designed by Tony Fiorito. Fantasy roleplaying module suitable for ***Dungeons & Dragons*** and other systems. One 48-page book. Playing time and number of players indefinite. Published 1984.

You might be a little disappointed to discover that ***Cloudland*** has nothing to do with angels, outer space, or even clouds, for that matter. The designer must've just liked the sound of the name. What's presented here boils down to an abandoned castle (Cloudland Castle, to be specific), a fair amount of treasure inside, the usual assortment of monsters and traps, and only the barest bones of a background story to set the scene. Sound familiar? Maybe, but that's not to say that ***Cloudland*** is entirely without merit.

Cloudland is clearly intended for beginners, and for new players familiar with roleplaying but

still confused about how to run an adventure, this is a good place to start. With its straightforward presentation and simple premise (search the castle, find the treasure, battle the creatures), it's especially good for novice GMs. Dull stuff to be sure for the experienced, but for a still-learning GM intimidated by the complexities of most roleplaying modules, it's made to order. The graphics and layout are nothing fancy, but they're adequate enough to get the job done.

Just a few complaints. Even though ***Cloudland*** is intended as a "generic" module adaptable to a number of systems, the designer has been pretty skimpy with statistics. In most encounters, only the number of hit dice and hit points are given, and it takes a fair amount of effort to flesh things out. The designer also got carried away with an overuse of poisoned objects, and there's an annoying number of corny names for the NPCs (along the lines of "Dame of Darkness" and magicians named "Minn and Maxx"). Finally, as a precaution for the faint-hearted (or as encouragement for the bloodthirsty), the encounters are often ridiculously gruesome; one room is filled with piles of hacked-off limbs, another with partially devoured dwarf bodies. Not exactly what you'd expect in a place called "Cloudland"!

There's definitely a place for simple introductory modules for new roleplayers, and ***Cloudland*** fills the bill nicely. The same elements that make it a treat for newcomers, however, will make it a real bore for the experienced. Size up your own group and proceed accordingly.

—Rick Swan

WHEN A STAR FALLS (TSR, Inc.); $6. Designed by Graeme Morris. Adventure module for ***Dungeons & Dragons***. One single-sided 11" x 17" map, one double-sided 11" x 17" map, 32-page rulebook. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

That little "UK" symbol in the corner of certain TSR modules must be their secret code for quality. I can't put my finger on what the modules in the series have in common (other than a slightly off-center approach), but there hasn't been a UK module yet that wasn't top-notch, and ***When A Star Falls*** is no exception. The premise is simple enough — the adventurers must return a fallen shooting star to its rightful owner — but there are twists and turns galore as the secrets of the star are gradually revealed.

The story of ***When A Star Falls*** is rich enough to stand on its own, a rarity considering that all too often the plotlines of roleplaying modules are just excuses to string together encounters. Designer Graeme Morris goes out of his way to avoid the usual cliches — for instance, rather than establish the setting with the tired old rumors-at-the-inn, he instead has come up with a bizarre "memory web" creature to convey this information. The NPCs are believable, the encounters are better than usual (wait'll you get a load of the steam-powered "bozorg"), and, to Morris' credit, the complex plot is easy to follow thanks to his crisp writing.

Success in the adventure requires the completion of several steps in more or less strict sequence, and DMs used to more freedom may find ***When A Star Falls*** too restricting. One round of bad luck (or ineptness) can bring the proceedings to a dead stop . . . and although that's certainly within the spirit of the game, in this case it could make for a pretty short session. On the flip side, players determined to avoid confrontation (there *are* players like that, aren't there?) could conceivably wrap this up in a couple of hours unless the DM intentionally makes it tougher.

Regardless of the playing time, ***When A Star Falls*** is certain to hold the attention of the most restless ***D&D*** squad. It's another high-quality UK effort, and is definitely worth checking out.

—Rick Swan

THE EMPIRE OF KARO (Fantasy Games Unlimited); $5. Designed by William Pixley. 25-page adventure pack for ***Aftermath***. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

The Empire of Karo is a background for an ***Aftermath*** campaign set in the Cairo, Illinois area, approximately 20 years after a large chemical and biological Ruin. It has a large-scale map of the area, a town map, and several building layouts for personal or adventure use. Major personalities in the town are given a short write-up and descriptions of many town businesses are included. Seven mini-adventures set in and around the area make up roughly half of the booklet. The layout and artwork are very good, as you would expect from FGU, and the cardstock cover prevents the interior pages from getting too dogeared.

The Empire of Karo does a good job of portraying the area. The Ruin background is plausible, as is the history and the reasons for the town's rise in power. The politics and personalities give ample room for the players to get their licks in with almost any group, and a good GM should be able to juggle several intertwined plots based on what the characters do. The information presented on the town itself is very thorough, with 10 "government" buildings and 37 businesses (each with a short description of the owner and family) well-described. Room is included in the town for the GM to add more if desired. This, combined with the various subplots floating around, gives you a good feel for the town and the flow of daily life.

Unfortunately, not enough work went into the area outside the town. Other than the local towns and the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, there are *no* terrain features on the large-scale map. While the town is well-described, it looks too small for the population of 6500. There is no mention of how or where the rest of the residents live, or what the territory within the immediate area looks like. With roughly half the booklet being mini-adventures, it is a shame that half of them are . . . below average. It seems that William Pixley went out of his way to include every aspect of the ***Aftermath*** rules in this adventure pack, even the bizarre ones. Without giving the plots away, all I can say is that of the last three adventures, one has a serious technical flaw, one stretches plausibility, and the last went beyond the elastic limit of rational plots.

On the whole, ***The Empire of Karo*** leaves a bit to be desired. If you've just bought ***Aftermath*** it might be a good investment, just so you can get a glimpse into the type of world you could run; and it could always be used for ideas. But an experienced GM will already have a world set up, and this pack might not fit in. As far as adventures go, you'll probably find that you could design much better adventures on your own. What is useful here is marred by incompleteness, and I think the money is better spent elsewhere.

—Greg Porter

TREASURE VAULT (Blade/Flying Buffalo); $6.95. Written by Steven D. Howard. 40-page generic fantasy roleplaying supplement. Published 1984.

Treasure Vault is Blade's latest addition to its "Catalyst Series" of generic fantasy roleplaying supplements. It is written and illustrated in the same fine style as Blade's two ***Citybook*** releases, and is based on the same excellent generic system developed for those books.

But where ***Citybooks I*** and ***II*** dealt with entire cities, ***Treasure Vault*** is a much less ambitious undertaking which presents a group of items, most (but not all) magical in nature. Each of the twenty-some-odd items (here's an oddity: the front cover says there are 26 items, the introduction says there are 25, and the Table of Contents lists 24) comes with at least one non-player character and two scenarios associated with it.

Some of the items are fairly powerful, including a chalice that will yield a potion that cures all wounds, sickness, insanity, blindness, and poisoning instantly. There's also the Swords of the Elements, a group of four weapons with distinctive (and awesome) powers. I would think at least three times before I let any of the players in my campaign get their hands on any of those swords.

There are other items that have the ability to embroil a group in all sorts of adventures while having little or no powers of their own. There's the emerald eye pried loose from the statue of an idol and zealously tracked by the priests of that god — it's got to be incredibly powerful, right? Well, maybe . . .

At $6.95, ***Treasure Vault*** is priced less than the other books in the "Catalyst Series," but it still might be a tad overpriced. But the ideas are solid, and the execution is good. Anyone tired of the same old strength batteries or vorpal blades will find some fresh ideas here.

—Scott D. Haring

MIDNIGHT ON DAGGER STREET (TSR); $6. Designed by Merle M. Rasmussen. Cardboard folder, two 16" x 22" double-sided maps, tear-off cardboard sheet with character stats on one side and charts on the other, 8-page booklet, and "magic viewer." For one player; playing time one to three hours. Published 1984.

Midnight on Dagger Street is a solitaire adventure (MV1) for ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons***. Three sixth-level characters (monk, assassin, and thief) are provided with matching missions. The action takes place in the waterfront area of a town depicted in four maps representing the four levels of the area — rooftops, second story, street, and underground. The "magic viewer" is a framed piece of red cellophane that is used to view the area of the map or read the area of text camouflaged by red mottling. The given adventures feature the rescue of a princess, a search for hidden treasure, and a scavenger hunt for components to a complex spell. It is quite possible to have an adventure just wandering around.

The unique camouflage map presents definite advantages over TSR's previous uses of chemically-hidden texts: The features on the map remain hidden no matter how often you play the adventures, and the inability to see beyond your immediate area gives a good simulation of wandering around a very foggy waterfront. The four-level effect is great fun for players who like to sneak and skulk, and adds a good feeling of depth to the adventure. The adventures themselves are fairly well thought out. The rescure operation is, perhaps, the central feature of the module, and a moderate challenge. The treasure hunt is the easiest: Even if you lose track of the clues, you are likely to stumble across the treasure. The search for the spell components is the most challenging of the bunch (sometimes to the point of tedium).

In spite of being played with sixth-level characters, the module is billed as "introductory" and does indeed best fit that bill. Magic-using characters do not fit well here, but can be played.

Some rough areas: The encounter in the thieves' guild gives inconsistent results; the monster hit chart lacks armor class listings; and the map can be difficult to read in poor light.

Despite these minor faults, ***Midnight on Dagger Street*** will give several hours of fun and serves as a good module for inexperienced players. I look forward to TSR's perfection of the magic viewer technique.

—David J. Butler

CURSE OF THE CHTHONIANS (Chaosium); $10. Designed by David A. Hargrave, Bill Barton, and William Hamblin. One 8½" x 11" 86-page rulebook. Scenario book for ***Call of Cthulhu***. Playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Curse of the Chthonians, also billed as "Four Odysseys into Deadly Intrigue," is one of Chaosium's scenario-packs for ***CoC***. The package consists of three scenarios (one of which is lengthy and presented in two parts, and can qualify as two complete scenarios) and a rather nifty two-page description of "The Kabbalistic Science of Gematria," an analysis of that numeric "science" for modern gamers and other readers. The three/four scenarios included are ***Dark Carnival***, by Dave Hargrave; ***The Curse of Chaugnar Faugn*** by Bill Barton (hi, Bill!); and the linked scenarios, ***Thoth's Dagger*** and ***The City Without a Name*** by William Hamblin (who also did the Gematria piece). ***Carnival*** is a rather simply-arranged adventure — "Here's the site, here's the map key, here are the NPCs, this stuff can happen." ***Curse*** is a more episodic adventure — the characters get swept up into a series of events already initiated and must struggle to keep themselves alive and bring things to a satisfactory conclusion. ***Dagger/City*** is also an episodic scenario, and allows the player-characters a bit of travel — to Egypt and Jerusalem.

Of the scenarios, I liked ***Curse*** best. The adventure allows for both investigation and fast-paced (rollicking?) action, has interesting NPCs, a neat premise, and is well-presented. It could provide for some interesting changes in the recurring player-characters, but ***Call of Cthulhu*** is especially prone to that anyway, considering its lethality and Sanity point loss.

Dagger/City isn't quite as tightly-plotted as ***Curse***. It's certainly well-researched, especially the ***City*** half, which features the Gematrian science as an integral feature; however, characters with less interest in investigation than in action/adventure will probably need some diversion in the early parts of ***City***. A problem with ***Dagger/City*** involves the exotic locales in the adventures. The characters get to go to Alexandria, Cairo, Jerusalem, and other sites, but the "tourist" information included in the scenario is minimal. As important as exotic locales were to many pulp adventures, I'd have expected more such material; as it stands, a Keeper will have to do a certain amount of library research to gamemaster these episodes convincingly. (To be fair, this review comes shortly after I ran my own ***Justice Inc.*** players through an adventure running from Alexandria to Luxor; and having done all the necessary research for an adventure which will never see print, I resent seeing a published package where the research was obviously undertaken but not included.) More problems arise in ***Carnival***, which is really not much of an adventure. It establishes a menace to deal with, includes the possibility for some rather creepy episodes, and provides some period color, but it's an undirected scenario — a setting without a plot.

I'd recommend you buy ***Curse of the Chthonians***, in spite of its shortcomings. A good Keeper can make ***Carnival*** into quite an event. An afternoon in your local library will make ***Dagger/City*** into a colorful, exotic episode. And ***Curse*** is a well-rounded, fast-moving scenario with a healthy helping of period flavor. It's a good package.

—Aaron Allston

RAHASIA (TSR, Inc.); $6. Designed by Tracy and Laura Hickman. Adventure module (B7) for ***Basic Dungeons & Dragons***. 32-page book, 24" x 11" folder. For five to eight players of levels 1-3; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Rahasia involves the players in a conflict between an elven village and the Temple of Gray Mountain. The elves used to worship there until an evil cleric called the Rahib found a way into the secret, unplumbed depths of the mountain. There he awakened a trio of evil witches trapped in the ruins of an old wizard's tower (upon which the temple is built). The Rahib then magically enslaved the temple priests and freed two of the witches. To free the third, he desires the body of pretty Rahasia. Rahasia sends the players to the temple to stop the Rahib and to free her friends.

A nice story combined with an interesting temple complex makes this module a good one. The villains are well-portrayed and have definite objectives. New monsters include a Bone Golem, a Water Weird (similar to its ***Monster Manual*** incarnation), and a Haunt (different from the ***AD&D*** version).

I have only two complaints about the module. The first is the possible use of sleep gas on the characters at two points in the module (if they try to enter via a certain method, and if they refuse to help Rahasia). No saving throw is allowed and the characters wake up in prison cells. Nothing is mentioned about who makes the stuff or where it is stored; the Rahib apparently does not know of its existence, or he would be using it. Is this necessary? The attack in the woods could overcome the characters with (for instance) nets from the trees; and since the entrance mentioned above leads to a prison cell anyway, there is no real need for the gas — just give the cell a better lock. The gas is both "un-elvish" and "unheroic," a way of quickly disposing of the characters. I expect something better from the people who gave us ***Ravenloft***. My second complaint concerns the arena, where characters meet various random monsters up to and including a green dragon! Either think of a better reason for this to exist or get rid of it.

All in all, however, this is a good module. Its emphasis is not on killing; the priests and guards opposing the characters are not responsible for their actions at all. Even the witches cannot be done away with in the conventional manner, because they are just occupying bodies. A module that forces the players to think is always a good buy, and I recommend ***Rahasia***.

—Wayne Ligon

BATTLE ABOVE THE EARTH (FGU); $5. Designed by Steven Crow. Adventure for ***Villains and Vigilantes***. One 8½" x 11" 18-page book, 2 bind-in counter sheets with 83 counters. For two to four players plus referee; playing time four to six hours. Published 1984.

What is the secret of the Big Rock? What does it have to do with the mysterious, Bigfoot-like Lizard Man? And what happened to ace reporter Johnny Dugan? Finding the answers to these questions leads your superheroes to a battle on the monstrous Space Station One, in orbit above Earth, to prevent a ruthless group of super-villains from turning the planet over to the reptilian Logrellians. The little town of Big Rock, the Space Station, the aliens and their super-villain allies: All this is ready for the enterprising ***Villains and Vigilantes*** gamemaster to start the epic adventure.

Battle Above the Earth should please everybody. It includes detective work, mindless slugfests, rules for zero-gravity, a map of a space station, new vehicles, new (and nasty) aliens, and a pretty ruthless bunch of new super-villains. Even the Lizard Man or a neutral called Commander Astro might show, if the going gets rough.

On the down side, FGU's artwork has suffered; Jeff Dee did only the villain sketches, not the counters or cover art. The other artists together (five of them!) aren't equal to Jeff's talent. Graphics have suffered, too: The space station floor plan should have been done with a grid, like the side view.

Battle Above the Earth is an excellent scenario, though, and was designed to fit into any contemporary or futuristic ***Villains and Vigilantes*** campaign. With a little fudging, it could even be modified to use with other superhero systems . . .

—Craig Sheeley

BORDER CROSSING (Hero Games); $5.95. Written by L. Douglas Garrett. Adventure module for ***Espionage!***, ***Danger International***, and ***Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes***. 32-page booklet with removable 4-page agent briefing. For one to six players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Border Crossing is an adventure for one to six agents using ***Espionage!*** rules. Conversions are provided for ***MS&PE***, but the slant of the rules makes it clear which system it was designed for. The interior artwork, illustrations, and maps are of the usual Hero quality (which could be a little better), and the back cover is a nice four-color map showing the general terrain in the probable mission area. The mission itself is quite simple (theoretically). Sneak across the East German border, snoop around a bit at a specific location, and sneak back out. Simple, right? It could be, depending on how it is run. There are five possible scenarios a GM can run, based on a central theme. These range from simple to brutal, for agents from beginning operatives to experienced veterals. (All require the agent to possess a 5- or 8-point skill package, so the GM might wish to let the agents know in advance what skills will be required of them. This will give them a couple adventures to get their affairs in order.) Contrary to the cover picture, no weapons other than penknives are allowed. Cover identity is as East German workers, and travel may result in searches. This is supposed to be a low-key mission. Competent agents with common sense should find this mission an interesting challenge and a way to hone their talents. Incompetent or rash ones will probably end up in a cold, dark hole somewhere behind the Iron

A Play-by-Mail Fantasy Game

StarMaster

Since 1980, StarMaster has been THE correspondence game of galactic exploration, diplomacy and conquest against which all others are measured.

- *Decide what diplomatic, economic and military policies your empire will follow.*
- *Explore parallel universes, other dimensions, Ringworlds, Dyson Spheres, black holes and White Gates.*
- *Deal with godlike beings and secret societies.*

StarMaster may be entered by purchasing the boxed version (with $20 in free turns!) at your local hobby store or by sending $25 to KSK Concepts. (NJ residents add sales tax). Include this ad when you register and get a free special action turn!

KSK CONCEPTS
P.O. Box 375
Morris Plains, NJ 07950

Curtain, and a lot will be beyond caring that it's cold and dark.

A lot of work has gone into making the adventure feel real. A detachable briefing sheet is provided for the players, with background, objectives, simulated recon photos, the works. The adventure adds the flavor of East German life, and common things the characters may hear (such as "Can I see your papers?") have German translations. Food, travel, weather, and lodging are all given extensive coverage. Little things like this add a lot to an adventure, and it is good to see a bit of effort put into it. Should the character need to run for it, this contingency is also given a bit of coverage. This plus the encounter tables make the module a useful reference work for any adventure behind the Iron Curtain.

The only possible complaint with ***Border Crossing*** is the lack of guaranteed violence that some players worship. If the mission is pulled off cleanly, there should be no traces and no violence. However, if the GM wants the characters put in a sticky situation, it can easily be arranged.

Border Crossing is well-written, with enough challenges and variations to keep even the best agents on their toes. The layout makes it easy to find the tables and maps needed, and the background information makes it a useful tool for any GM running Eastern Bloc scenarios. It's well worth the money.

—Greg Porter

TRIAD (Ragnarok Enterprises); $4. Designed by David Nalle. Adventure supplement for ***To Challenge Tomorrow***. One 5½" x 8½" 32-page rule and adventure booklet. For two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Triad is the first in a series of supplements published for the "generic" roleplaying game, ***To Challenge Tomorrow***. This expansion details the political and planetary situation of the Ishtar Sector in the 29th century. It provides complete system descriptions of the 14 major planets, a history of the sector, three scenarios, and revisions/errata to the *TCT* game system.

Triad provides an impressive array of information, though its strongest suit is undoubtedly the rich tapestry of background for this sector. The "Triad" from which this supplement gets its name is a ring that has control over practically every criminal activity in the sector. The scenarios provided give the GM a head start towards capitalizing on this unique setting and give the players a distant goal to achieve (something most science-fiction games tend to forget about).

I was disappointed to find that certain elements of a far-future culture are not covered in ***Triad***. There are no guidelines for creating new worlds and, while there are alien races listed, no rules exist for generating alien PCs either. There should have been more data than is actually provided.

While ***Triad is*** a far-future supplement, it was clearly not meant to cover *all* facets of the future. With this thought in mind it is well worth the money. Those who own *TCT* should pick it up; those who have not had the pleasure of playing *TCT* should pick up both the game and this supplement.

—Jerry Epperson

FORCES OF FANTASY (Games Workshop); $12.95. Designed by Rick Priestly and Bryan Ansell. Supplement for ***Warhammer***. Three 8" x 10" booklets, boxed. Published 1984.

Forces of Fantasy is the first of several proposed supplements to the ***Warhammer*** mass-combat roleplaying system. The set consists of three volumes of material that expand the basic ***WH*** system, as well as some corrections to the original game.

Volume I is entitled "Forces of Fantasy," and covers regimental organization and point values for building armies. A random generation table is included to allow players to create armies for just about any fantasy race, including elves, dwarves, men, orcs, goblins, halflings, lizardmen, and the dreaded Chaos hordes. Some nice rules are included for balancing out the effects of the undead hosts, such as their instability, and the effects of fighting at dawn or in twilight.

Volume II is entitled "Fighting Fantasy Battles"; it adds rules for siege weapons, advanced rules for mounted troops, additional weapons bonuses, and painting guidelines for the different armies, along with shield and banner patterns. Another bonus is a list of "Regiments of Renown," a somewhat tongue-in-cheek list of sample regiments that can be used by players. My favorite is "Bugman's Dwarf Rangers," a group of ex-brewers turned warriors. Their shield device is a mug with crossed battleaxes!

Volume III is "Arcane Magicks," which adds new magical items, potions, and monsters to the ***WH*** system, along with a revised spell listing. There are some good rules for rune weapons and other enchanted weaponry that add to the fantasy setting of ***WH***.

Overall, this is a nice package, but you need ***WH*** to use it to the fullest. Some elements could be adapted to other systems, but at $12.95, it's a risky investment.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

LIGHTNING BOLTS & LASERS (Quartermaster); $12. Edited by Raymond M. Phillips. Supplement to ***Starguard***. 80-page book. For an indefinite number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Lightning Bolts & Lasers is the second supplement to the popular science-fiction miniatures game, ***Starguard***. Unlike the first supplement, ***Orilla***, ***Lightning Bolts & Lasers*** includes tactical advice and strategies, as well as nine new races, profiles of three armored vehicles, stats on 11 more vehicles and weapons, and the usual statistics on the various weapons used by the new forces. The tactical advice includes helpful hints on deployment and employment of troops, as well as general organization and marching orders. And, of course, races with different ways of deploying troops have their peculiar tactics detailed in the description of the race or force. New forces include Terran Marines, in their white armor (*very* familiar to ***Star Wars*** fans), the Colonials, the ursoid Alin Ru, the short, felinoid Bastep, and the Fabians (otherwise known as "the space Nazis"). Tables in the back give maximum ranges for the weapons of ***Starguard*** (a previously neglected item).

Starguard players will appreciate the maximum range tables, the tactical advice, and the semi-dramatic race histories, still in the story-style of ***Starguard***.

Effective as ***Lightning Bolts & Lasers*** is, it could have used more illustration, like the books that came before it had. And while Quartermaster was busy providing vehicle stats, it could have given the stats for the AT-AT, which was mentioned but not statted.

Lightning Bolts & Lasers really doesn't provide enough information to rate the $12 price tag, but completists who play the ***Starguard*** system might care to invest in it.

—Craig Sheeley

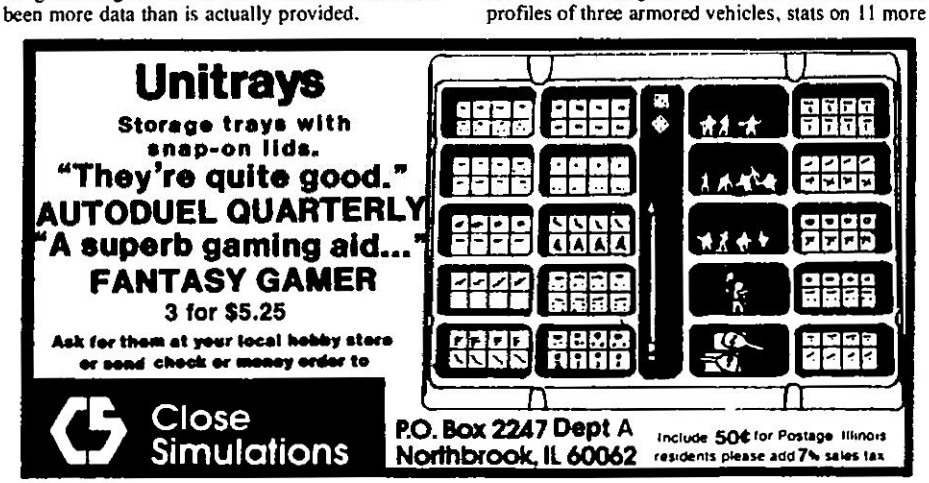
PLAY AIDS

STAR FLEET BATTLES REINFORCEMENTS (Task Force Games); $6.95. No designer credited. Supplemental material for ***Star Fleet Battles***. Four sheets of 108 counters, in folder with notes inside and planet templates on the back. Published 1984.

SFB Reinforcements is another item in the ***Star Fleet Battles*** lineup which is almost necessitated by the complexity of the game. The counter sets provide more ship counters for those players who found the quantities of certain ships provided in the original counter mix to be insufficient. Here are war cruisers, Romulan ships, mines, defense satellites, exploding ships, monsters, and a black hole, along with rival factions for the Lyrans, Kzinti, and Orions (the rivals are all in different color schemes). Bases for each race can be found, usually buried among the shuttles. The makers of the sheets decided that people had been screaming for more shuttle counters, so they filled the demand. Every race has at least four or more shuttle counters in this mix (some as many as eight!), and there are three Multi-Role Shuttle counters. The back cover features huge cut-out planet templates.

SFB Reinforcements seems to specialize in filling gaps; I noted counters for ships heretofore only seen in *Nexus* issues or in *Captain's Logs*; the King Eagle, for instance, and the Lyran war cruiser. The extra mines and asteroid counters are handy, but the crowning glories of the set are the rival faction counters and the planet templates on the back of the folder. These are Voyager photos of Jupiter and the Galilean moons. The smallest templates are three hexes across, while Jupiter hulks at *eleven* hexes wide.

I found some problems with this set. Why so many shuttles? *I* seldom need more than three shuttles per side. There are some counters in the generic group that are complete mysteries. And I can see a black hole counter, but a counter for a *pulsar?* If the template for a *small* gas giant is 11 hexes across, why a one-hex counter for a pulsar? The pulsar in the game is not the spinning neutron star (which would be one hex wide) but actually a flare star, which would be the size of the game board!


Unitrays
Storage trays with snap-on lids.
"They're quite good."
AUTODUEL QUARTERLY
"A superb gaming aid..."
FANTASY GAMER
3 for $5.25
Ask for them at your local hobby store or send check or money order to
Close Simulations
P.O. Box 2247 Dept A
Northbrook, IL 60062
Include 50¢ for Postage Illinois residents please add 7% sales tax

Star Fleet Battles Reinforcements is a pretty expensive set of counters; even assaying 50¢ for the folder and templates, the counters come out at 1½¢ *apiece*. If you feel the price is justified by the increased fleets possible with the new counters, then by all means buy this set. However, if you can keep going with the original mix, then save your money.

—Craig Sheeley

CARDBOARD HEROES CHAMPIONS SET 3: ENEMIES (Steve Jackson Games); $2.95. Painted by Denis Loubet. Three cards of 12 villains each, assembly and identification sheet, zip-lock bag. Authorized ***Champions*** accessory. Published 1984.

The villains have arrived! ***Enemies*** presents 36 villains (and villainesses: ten are female) culled from ***Enemies I & II***, scenarios in *Space Gamer*, Hero Games' ***Champions*** adventures, and even from the front of the ***Champions*** box! (Ever wondered who that baddie on the box with the famous curving eye-beam is? Now we know: It's *Holocaust*.) Here are some of the more flamboyant villains: Dr. Destroyer and his protege, Professor Muerte; animalists like Cobra, Wyvern, Stinger, Black Mamba, Pantera, Ray; techno-villains like Lady Blue, Ankylosaur, Blowtorch, and the robot Mechanon; changed persons Grond, Feur, Sunburst; aliens Insectoid and the Monster . . . the whole gamut of the super-powered. All are easily recognizable, taken from drawings by Mark Williams (except Black Diamond and Sliver — Loubet originals from the *Space Gamer* articles). Even the super-failure Foxbat is faithfully represented.

Although the basic ideas may have been Mark Williams', these renditions are better by far! The artwork is smooth and very colorful; all of the characters represented are in complete proportion (a welcome change from Mark Williams). I especially liked the new robot body for Mechanon: from a bad Gort copy to a pretty spiffy robot.

Unfortunately, Mr. Loubet's creations are not without flaw: They are larger than those in the first ***Champions Cardboard Heroes*** set; the males in the pack generally have less than inspiring facial expressions (either confused or teeth-gritting); and furthermore, the males are for the most part in rather static poses. At least five of the represented males can fly, but all of them are just standing in various unimaginative attitudes. This would not be so startling if the reverse did not apply to the ladies: seven out of eleven are in action poses, and three are in flight stance. Their facial expressions are much more animated than those of the men; indeed, some of the ladies have nastier snarls than the male teeth-gritters. And, while the women aren't as heavily muscled as the men, they still bear, for the most part, striking resemblances to professional weight-lifters (except Ladybug. She's not wearing armor; she had the metal sprayed on!).

Criticism aside, ***Enemies*** is a great set. ***Champions***, being a movement game, needs representative counters for the heroes and villains, and the three dozen in the first ***Cardboard Heroes*** pack weren't enough. If you play ***Champions***, or *any* superhero game using markers, this set is a must.

—Craig Sheeley

COMPUTER GAMES

VODAC: THE ALPINE ENCOUNTER (Ibidinc); $39.95. Author: Carol Anderson; Senior Technical Programmer: Michael Feldman. For Apple II+ or IIE with 48K and one disk drive. 5¼" floppy disk, with instruction pamphlet, boxed. For one player. Published 1983.

VODAC: The Alpine Encounter is an espionage thriller. All of the classic elements are there: an alpine ski resort, the ski slopes, beautiful women, and an evil plot. The player's job is to foil the evil plot before it can come to completion. This game uses a unique combination of hi-res graphics and arcade sequences to produce an interesting adventure. Well-done high-resolution graphics depict various scenes throughout the resort and the ski slopes. Movement is by keyboard input, with the exception of skiing; this can be controlled with an optional joystick or paddles. The arcade-style ski sequence can be a welcome relief from the tedious task of searching for clues — but that doesn't mean the bad guys are about to leave you alone.

The game itself is put together well. The graphics are good, and there is no long delay when shifting from scene to scene. The plot is sufficiently complex to require many sessions to complete the adventure. The characters and information are presented in different locations and sequences, so there is some variety to the attempts. There is enough action to maintain interest while going through the repetitive process of searching for clues.

There is only one major flaw with ***VODAC***, and that is the documentation. The program is very sensitive to correct phrasing; the problem arises because the existing documentation covers only about half of the required commands. In addition, certain commands have to be given in a certain order or the program will not understand. This problem is not fatal (to the player; what happens to your character can be a different story!). One of my characters starved to death in a snack bar trying to guess the correct phrasing to get food. This can be frustrating.

For people who like espionage adventures,

THE WEAPON is the exciting new computer moderated, multi-player PBM game of space exploration, combat and diplomacy. Innovative fill-in-the-blank turn sheets make order writing the easiest yet. Custom design starships from small scout vessels to super-dreadnaughts containing THE WEAPON, the most awesome force in the universe. Game includes designing planetary defenses, conducting trade, invasions of worlds and ship to ship combat. THE WEAPON is easy to learn, yet satisfyingly complex in the fast, unpredictable nature of multi-player gaming. THE WEAPON has been thoroughly play-tested and starting positions are available NOW!

Send $2.00 U.S. for the rules and more information

SIGIL

P.O. Box 1903, Indianapolis, Indiana U.S.A. 46206

VODAC can be fun and exciting. First you have to figure out the correct commands to be used; then you have to solve the mystery and save the world. If you are willing to accept this dual challenge, ***VODAC: The Alpine Encounter*** is the game for you.

Incidentally, nowhere in the documentation does the author explain what VODAC stands for. I guess that's being saved for a later game.

—Terry Rooker

ENCHANTER (Infocom); $49.95. Computer diskette for the Apple II, IBM PC, Atari 800, Commodore 64, other common PCs. Boxed; one diskette, player aids including introductory "scroll" and informational pamphlet. Playing time four hours and up (games may be saved). Published 1983.

Enchanter represents Infocom's first independent effort in solo FRP computer gaming. Previous atempts such as ***Zork I*** were based on the popular PDP-11 game of ***Dungeon***, so ***Enchanter*** represents a significant undertaking for Infocom. In fact, ***Enchanter*** is described as the "first of a spellbinding series in the ***Zork*** tradition." As could be expected, the game has relative strengths and weaknesses as compared to ***Zork***.

As is typical of Infocom, the physical components are quite exceptional. There is a scroll (complete with ersatz plastic "seal") which describes what you, a young magician, are to accomplish. Also included is a booklet provided by the "guilds"; each guild sets out rules and recommendations. The diskette itself is copy-protected.

The task? You are to overthrow the Evil Wizard who has taken over the land; to accomplish this task you set out with a paltry number of spells and no equipment. Of course, there is no way for you to defeat the Evil Wizard when you start, so you must travel along, finding wondrous magic, solving mysterious puzzles, and making friends (and possibly enemies) as you go along. Eventually, you will become powerful enough to meet and defeat the Evil Wizard.

Enchanter is not easy; fortunately, tip books are available from Infocom (at $7.95), and many players may have to resort to these books to solve the game (as I did). The game follows the ***Zork*** traditon relatively well, but is physically less challenging: the player has a smaller number of areas to explore than in ***Zork I, II,*** or ***III***. Also, the parser seems to be just a bit weaker; to accomplish a certain task requires exactly *one* of several possible word choices, when the program recognizes any of a number of words that should seemingly accomplish the same task.

Despite all this, ***Enchanter*** is still a lot of fun, and if you're into the all-text, no-picture sort of roleplaying, I heartily recommend it.

—Ron Boerger

PUBLICATIONS

TORTURED SOULS (Beast Enterprises Limited, Divinity Road, Oxford, OX4 1LR, England); 1.95 pounds (3.50 pounds for American orders). 8¼" x 11" 40-page magazine; publishing frequency unknown. Issue No. 3 published March 1984.

This is an interesting idea: a British magazine which contains nothing but adventure modules for roleplaying games. Confirmed roleplayers with interest in nothing but scenarios don't have to wade through editorial material, reviews, news, variant articles, columns, or interviews. The issue at hand (No. 3) contains four scenarios.

The Thing in the Attic, which sounds like a ***Call of Cthulhu*** adventure, is actually a short ***D&D*** scenario; it's a short and fairly minor adventure, but it features an interesting thing in the attic, and you're given nicely-delineated floorplans of a building, suitable for use in future adventures. ***The Trollball Trophy*** is a ***RuneQuest*** scenario involving, believe it or not, repercussions from the theft of a lead trollball prize. ***Zhalindor*** and ***Galizhard*** are a ***D&D*** campaign supplemént and adventure: ***Zhalindor*** outlines, in rough, an entire campaign setting, including notes on character classes, alignment, magic, monsters, races, language, law, politics, and more, and includes a loose full-color map (a good one) of the campaign setting. ***Galizhard*** is a well-delineated city in the Zhalindor campaign; it includes notes on the city and an interesting mystery adventure. ***Brohar's Bane*** is part II of an adventure started in *TS* #2; it's an ***AD&D*** solo, unusual in that it's keyed to maps in addition to the normal number-flow solo adventure format.

I liked *Tortured Souls* for the most part. The ***Zhalindor*** and ***Galizhard*** material was especially useful, and follows my personal preference in adventure presentation; it gives the buyers a reusable, interesting setting and a plotted-style adventure which feels more like a fantasy novel than more ordinary published scenarios. The magazine is published on heavy slick paper, contains art which ranges from crude to quite acceptable, and includes the very nice unbound map for ***Zhalindor***.

Problems? There are a few. ***The Thing in the Attic*** and ***The Trollball Trophy*** follow the venerable ***D&D*** adventure presentation style: Give the players a situation, and give the GM a map on which the characters wander, running into critters without a semblance of plot or story. The print is small and illustrations occasional, making this magazine a bit difficult to read and not very pleasing graphically. I don't know how *Tortured Souls* makes any money; it's forty pages plus insert map on heavy paper, with common use of color, and *no ads* — I hope this means that the magazine sells enough that ad revenue isn't necessary, but I've never seen a professional magazine where this was the case. And one last problem: I don't know whether I'd want *Tortured Souls* to include modern-day adventures, or whether I wish that Beast Enterprises would release a sister magazine devoted to contemporary scenarios . . . but as it stands, the all-fantasy format is only of use to fantasy GMs. So it goes.

If you *are* a fantasy GM, I'd wholeheartedly recommend *Tortured Souls* to you. It's pretty good.

—Aaron Allston

A GLOSSARY OF THE CONSTRUCTION, DECORATION, AND USE OF ARMS AND ARMOR IN ALL COUNTRIES AND IN ALL TIMES (Jack Brussel); $17.95. Written by George Cameron Stone. 700-page book. Published 1981.

This book is an exhaustive glossary of all types of weapons and armor from all over the world. It consists of alphabetical listings (over 10,000!) of different kinds of arms and armor.

This book has many strong points. First, since it is so extensive, it is a good source of new weapons for your FRPG. Add some spice to your campaign with the Indian ***bagh nakh***, or with the Gilbert Island ***tebutje***. Those with an interest in Japanese weapons and armor will be very gratified by this volume. This book has 40 listings just for various types of *boomerangs!* The listings for knives and swords take almost a page each.

As useful and exhaustive as this volume is, it has its flaws. Although it is extensively indexed, it is sometimes *badly* indexed. Sometimes a listing will send you to another listing, only to have the next one do the same thing. It also appears to have some important omissions — I can't find a listing for throwing stars. Finally, the work is of limited use to the fantasy gamer; sure, there may be about 500 types of knife listed here, but they all do about the same amount of damage in an FRP game.

But the most important deterrent to the average gamer is the price. Its list price is $50; I got mine through a remainder house for $17.95, and even that is a little steep. I recommend this book (at $17.95) to someone with a real need for something as detailed and exhaustive as this book, and to FRPG designers as a sourcebook. Its high cost and limited use prevent me from recommending it to the average player or GM.

—Lawrence Person

THE PALLADIUM BOOK OF EXOTIC WEAPONS (Palladium Books); $5.95. Compiled by Matthew Balent. One 7" x 10" 50-page booklet. Published 1984.

The Palladium Book of Exotic Weapons is the latest in a series of booklets from Palladium Books that are meant to supplement just about any game system. The booklet's stated purpose is to provide gamers with information on unusual weaponry so they can personalize their RPG characters. The weapons are broken down by type (pole weapons, thrown weapons, etc.), illustrated, and the cultures using them described briefly.

Ther are a couple of problems with this book. First of all, many of the weapons listed in it are not really that exotic. Halberds, flails, maces, throwing axes, and clubs do not, in my opinion, qualify as exotic weapons, yet all of them are included in this book. In fact, many of the weapons in this book have already been covered in previous Palladium books. I also find that the damage ratings assigned to many of the weapons are exaggerated. I really can't believe that a heavy African throwing knife can do as much damage as a halberd! The short sword used by the ninja assassins can't be any more lethal than the *wakizashi* short sword carried by samurai warriors. *Exotic Weapons* tends to forget

NEW HORIZONS

Save up to 25% off New Comics & Games!!

We also carry a complete line of Japanese Models & Toys.

Send want list of back-issue comics. We also have standing orders for new comics. All comics sent bagged!

Send $2.00 for a complete catalog (refunded with first order) to:

New Horizons
150 Terrel Plaza, Suite 21, San Antonio, TX 78239.

that most of the weapons it covers were used by assassins or martial artists who knew how to extract the most effect from these unusual arms. Also, many of the devices were used by cultures that did not wear heavy armor, if they wore armor at all. I am sure the shark-tooth swords of the Gilbert Islands were effective against lightly-armored foes, but I doubt they would have made much of an impression against chainmail. A final problem with this book is that most combat systems aren't set up to take advantage of the special attacks that could be made with some of the weapons listed. With the exception of ***The Fantasy Trip***, most RPGs ignore exotic weapons and their specialized attacks.

Overall, I can only recommend this book to gamemasters who want to add something unusual to their campaigns, and who are willing to make modifications to fit in these specialized weapons.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

MINIATURES

DUNGEON RAIDERS — Fantasy Lords Set #6007 (Grenadier Models); $9.95. Twelve 25mm metal figures, with foam-lined box. Sculpted by Andrew Chernak. Released 1984.

This new boxed set from Grenadier is a special commemorative edition marking the 10th anniversary of the ***Dungeons & Dragons*** game. After so many excellent Grenadier releases, it becomes difficult to say anything new about how good these figures are. As always, the sculpting is phenomenal, the quality superb. The figures themselves are typical dungeon exploration characters, with some unique variations. The set contains a special paladin figure of which only 10,000 will be molded.

The set is unique in its choice of figures to represent the typical ***D&D*** adventuring party. Instead of your typical knife- or sword-wielding cloaked assassin, this set has a ninja with a *kusarigama* (a chain with a sickle on one end and a set of weights on the other). Rather than give gamers the usual Elven archer, this set has the High Elf Slaymaster. This figure wears Middle Eastern garb with nicely detailed armor covering only the arms and shoulders. My only complaint is that the wavy-bladed two-hand sword is somewhat thin. Another nice figure is the High Cleric, which is garbed like an archbishop rather than a mace-wielding monk. The female hobbit thief with staff and short sword is an uncommon offering, one that is sure to be useful to fantasy gamers. The "limited edition" paladin is a marvelously detailed casting with a magnificent crested great helm and finely detailed plate mail armor. The only flaw in my opinion is that the figure is in the act of drawing its sword from its scabbard. I suppose Andy Chernak has sculpted enough paladins with swords drawn, and wanted something slightly different.

Since the figures are somewhat specialized, I would recommend this set to collectors, or gamers who need unique versions of the standard ***D&D*** character classes, rather than to gamers looking for ordinary miniatures. Still, you can't go wrong with a quality set like this if you want a basic dungeon adventuring party.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

DRAGON KILLERS — Advanced Level Adventurers (Grenadier Models); $7.95. Nine 25mm lead miniatures with foam-lined box. Sculpted by Andrew Chernak. Released 1984.

Dragon Killers is the latest release in the "DragonLords" line from Grenadier. This series (along with the "Fantasy Lords" figures) replaced the older ***Advanced D&D*** line that Grenadier produced under license from TSR. The "DragonLords" figures tend to be reissues of the old ***AD&D*** miniatures, although all the castings in this set are brand-new creations. As with all the new Grenadier releases, the sculpting is superb and the quality control is excellent.

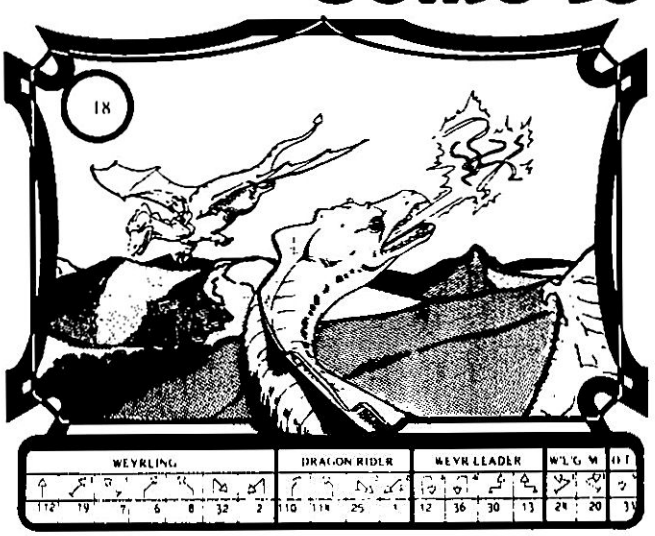
Despite the title, these figures are really nothing more than a typical dungeon exploration party. What sets them apart is the uniquely-styled figures that Andy Chernak has created for such standard characters as thieves, fighters, and barbarians. The figures in this set: cleric, berserker, paladin, fighter, female in plate armor, wizard, half-orc thief/assassin, ranger, and "war dog." With the exception of the orc and the war dog, all the figures are human, and none carry any pole weapons or missile weapons, a somewhat curious omission.

My favorite figures are the berserker and the thief/assassin. The berserker is bare-chested and has a wolfskin cloak thrown across his shoulders; he is posed in an attack stance with an axe and a sword, ready to strike. The figure closely resembles the classic Viking berserker, and could easily fit in a historical miniatures game. The half-orc assassin, a very nicely done figure, appears to be slowly creeping up on his intended victim. In one hand, he has a knife with a brass knuckle guard (highly reminiscent of the US army's old WWI trench knife) while he holds his scabbarded sword behind him as if to prevent it from rattling and betraying him. Leather shoulder armor adds to his nasty, rough-and-ready appearance.

The war dog is certainly a unique offering, if somewhat limited in appeal. This version of man's best friend has a chainmail vest and a viciously-studded collar. The rest of the figures are pretty much standard, although the little details on them set them apart from the bulk of 25mm figures. The heavily embroidered robe on the wizard and the

Anne McCaffrey's Dragon Riders of Pern

Come to Life!!



The latest game in Nova's unique picturebook game system allows players to fight the scorching Thread that threatens to destroy the planet of Pern. It is a game of competetive co-operation as each Rider attempts to gain prestige by destroying more Thread than his wingmate. Allowing Thread to reach the ground causes a loss of prestige. Saving the planet is paramount.

An innovative scoring system requires players to work together, yet allows them to gain individual promotions, experience, and social standing. Players can choose from three games: a short game, a role-playing game, and a campaign game. Also included are characters from the novels.

Based on the best-selling fantasy novels of Anne McCaffrey and utilizing the award-winning picturebook game system pioneered in Ace of Aces® . Designed by Alfred Leonardi. **$12.95 per game** (Mail Order add 10% postage & handling)

Now Available From . . .

NOVA **GAME DESIGNS, INC.**

P.O. BOX 1178, MANCHESTER, CONN. 06040

flute details of the female fighter's plate armor are examples of this.

All in all, *Dragon Killers* is the perfect thing for gamers who want a somewhat more exotic set of dungeon adventurers. I highly recommend these figures.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

CALL OF CTHULHU MINIATURES (Grenadier Models); $1.50 per bubble pack (3 figures per pack). Set 201 — *G-Men or PI's*; Set 202 — *Thugs*; Set 203 — *Adventurers*; Set 204 — *Sinister Gentlemen*; Set 205 — *Investigators*; Set 206 — *Cops*; Set 207 — *Nightmares*; Set 208 — *Undead*; Set 209 — *Ghouls*; Set 210 — *Serpentmen*; Set 211 — *Sand Dwellers*; Set 212 — *Deep Ones*. 25mm miniatures for Chaosium's ***Call of Cthulhu*** roleplaying game. Produced 1984.

Grenadier's first two boxed sets of ***Call of Cthulhu*** figures broke a lot of ground: They were beautifully sculpted, nicely detailed, and reflected the source material perfectly. In 1984 Grenadier provided us with twelve more sets of miniatures suitable for collecting or for gaming with Chaosium's ***Call of Cthulhu*** (or with other roleplaying games dealing with a similar theme, such as Tri-Tac's ***Stalking the Night Fantastic*** or Pacesetter's ***Chill***).

Particularly noteworthy among the figures are the Sherlock Holmes lookalike (from *Investigators)*, the ghouls and their casket full of "dinner," and the trio of *Sinister Gentlemen:* Fu Manchu, Renfield, and the Fat Man (complete with the Maltese Falcon!). The "generic" monsters (such as *Nightmares* and *Undead)* are especially welcome for those who run ***Cthulhu*** with an occasional non-Mythos monster, or for those who run another horror RPG. Several of the human figures are also "generic" and can thus double as either their intended personae (like the *Thugs* or *G-Men)* or additional investigators.

I do have a few problems with the bubble packs. There is quite a bit of flash on these figures (which, of course, is easily cleaned with a knife), and there are no painting guides provided. Unless you have the boxed sets (which include painting guides), you may be hard-pressed to know how to paint up the various Mythos monsters. I also wish that Grenadier had included more female figures. The boxed sets included a good mix of women; the twelve bubble packs have only one woman among the eighteen human miniatures. Finally, the two Serpentmen are pretty much identical — except that one is carrying a knife and the other is carrying a staff.

I give these miniatures, despite my reservations, a hearty recommendation. These creeping horrors and the brave souls who fight them have definitely captured my interest and have started to gnaw at my soul. I'm looking forward to seeing more of the creatures from the Cthulhu Mythos in miniature. I hope Grenadier will come out with Cthulhu; it certainly would make an interesting bookend, if nothing else! And of course, there are the Primordial Ones from the South Pole, Nyarlathotep in at least a few of his thousand forms, Y'Golonac, and the rest of the horrible pack. Bring 'em on!

—Frederick Paul Kiesche III

THE OUTCASTS (RAFM Company Inc.); $1 to $7, depending on the figure. Blister-packed 25mm metal miniatures. Released 1984.

The Outcasts make up a new line of 25mm figures from RAFM Co. of Canada, a firm best known for producing Ral Partha and Citadel figures under license. Unlike many of RAFM's earlier releases, the Outcasts are highly imaginative and nicely sculpted.

This line consists of nine personality figures, and two multi-figure sets. What I like most about these miniatures is their unique styling, which looks like it was inspired by the movie *The Road Warrior*. The best way to describe these figures is "post-holocaust, punk-rock survivors." Pinhead the Assassin wears a spiked mohawk haircut and wrap-around sun glasses. His bow is a modern compound hunting model with pulleys and counter balances. The leader of the outcasts is Lord Gort who also has a punk haircut along with his modernistic body armor. His wrist-mounted crossbow is *not* your average weapon. Yob the Faceless One looks like he was taken directly from *The Road Warrior*, and his hockey goalie's mask and leg pads add to his makeshift appearance, although his rifle-stocked crossbow is certainly businesslike. Finally, for boomerang freaks, there is Digger the Thief, who is depicted flinging one with his right hand; his left hand has been replaced by a prosthetic dagger!

If you play ***Aftermath*** or ***The Morrow Project***, if you need some strange aliens for ***Traveller***, or if you just want some extraordinary figures for whatever system you use, check these miniatures out.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

DARK HORSE MINIATURES (Dark Horse, Box 633, Boise, Idaho 83701); $1 to $3.75. 25mm metal fantasy miniatures. Sculpted by Ian Lungold.

I have two major weaknesses: bad puns and well-crafted miniatures. So imagine my pleasure at discovering a single company that can pander to both weaknesses at the same time.

Dark Horse, an Idaho-based manufacturer, has an excellent 25mm line of miniatures. Its human figures tend to be ordinary . . . although they can rise to the sublime, as shown by the turbaned thief (reminiscent of Errol Flynn as the Thief of Bagdad), or the robed cleric "armed" with turkey leg and ale tankard. The orc line, again, is well-crafted but ordinary; the orc shaman and belly-dancing orc seductress are the exceptions here.

THE BEST IN PBM

BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE

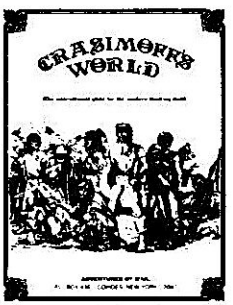
Beyond the Stellar Empire (BSE) is a science fiction role-playing game of unparalleled scope. You assume the persona of an interstellar starship captain interacting in the most detailed play-by-mail game ever created. BSE has it all; a multitude of unique solar systems composed of individually designed worlds, politics, and diplomacy, realistic economics and logistics, a comprehensive combat system, chartered companies and Imperial services, alien races, and exploration, invasion, and colonization of hostile planets.

TOP PBM GAME of 1983 and 1984

Beyond the Stellar Empire was chosen by editors of *GAMES* magazine as one of the top 100 games for both 1983 and 1984, the only PBM game so honored.

Complete Rules Package costs $5.00. Starter Package costs $17.00 and includes rules package, set-up, and two turns.

CRASIMOFF'S WORLD



Crasimoff's World is a PBM game of extraordinary quality and detail. Lead your party of fighters, magic users and priests through a fantastic land filled with adventure, magic, and danger. Each party member has a wide range of attributes and possessions. Loot dungeons, redeem swampmen heads for bounty, explore ancient ruins, raid dwarven encampments, and battle hill trolls in their underground domain. The world is complete in every detail; history, ecology, mythos, geography, and much, much more.

Complete Rules Package costs $3.00. Starter Package costs $15. -includes rules package, set-up, and two turns.

CAPITOL

Capitol is a fast playing strategic space warfare game that divides players into teams, pitting them against each other in an orgy of xenophobic fury. Capitol is unique in that it is a perfect introductory game for an individual new to play-by-mail games while at the same time detailed enough for the most experienced gamer.

Complete Rules Package costs $2.50. Starter Package costs $16.00 and includes rules package, set-up, and four turns.

Adventures By Mail has processed over 100,000 turns

WRITE OR CALL FOR OUR FREE DETAILED BROCHURES
MASTERCARD AND VISA CARD HOLDERS CAN START IN A GAME IMMEDIATELY BY TELEPHONING OUR HOTLINE SERVICE AT 518-237-4870
SEND CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS TO ADVENTURES BY MAIL, P.O.B. 436, COHOES, N.Y. 12047
MONEYBACK GUARANTEE IF NOT SATISFIED

It is with the nonhuman, non-orc figures that Dark Horse begins to shine. A line of fur-clad, mohawk-tressed barbarian elves, mounted and afoot, make a fine addition to any campaign. Tree trolls range from fearsome to humorous. The winged serpent is a true delight, and the Zwill is as horrible as it is delightful. In short, send a stamped envelope for the Dark Horse catalog. You won't regret it.

Not content to sit up in the mountains and make fine miniatures, the company decided to write a newsletter for its customers. The newsletter, *These are . . . DARK TIMES*, parodies, satirizes, and otherwise mocks more conventional house organs. It's a punster's delight, from the bizarre names on the masthead (the Editorial Assistant, Ellie Vadershaft, is my personal favorite) to such articles as the one on the use of the 12-gauge shotgun as a texturing tool, or the review of Guy Gary Egax's new game *Dunkerques & Dragoons*, in which 17th-century Italian soldiers are transported to France in 1940 and must avoid were-Panzers and Luftwaffe-birds in order to escape to Limeyland.

These are . . . DARK TIMES is mailed free to those who purchase miniatures through the mail, an incentive that would encourage me to buy their miniatures even if they weren't quite so well-crafted.

Dark Horse Miniatures: the company that dares to ask, "Is Idaho doomed . . . or just uncomfortable?" Check them out.

—Bob Kindel

CONAN MINIATURES (TSR, Inc.); $6. Six 25mm lead figures with foam-lined box. Released 1984.

When I first saw these figures at a local hobby store, I was a little skeptical about purchasing a set. The miniatures that TSR had released for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* had not impressed me, and I felt that the *Conan* figures would be just as mediocre, but the photos on the back of the box looked good, so I decided to take a chance and buy a set.

When I examined the figures, I was pleasantly surprised. The sculpting is first rate, with excellent attention to anatomical detail, and the poses are all action-filled. The figures are relatively free of flash except for the inevitable mold lines that are found on all miniatures. Unfortunately, this set does not list who sculpted the figures, but it has to be someone different from the sculptor(s) who did the *AD&D* sets.

The set consists of an assortment of figures from the various Conan stories as well as the movies. Included in this set are Conan, Valeria of the Red Brotherhood, Juma, Bor'aqh Sharaq, a lion, and a "manotor." These figures are large, oversized 25mm miniatures. Strangely enough, the lion, which should be the largest figure in the set, is the smallest, and looks more the size of a timber wolf than the king of the jungle. In spite of this minor flaw, the figures are perfect for just about any FRP system. My two favorites are Valeria, who is garbed as a pirate and has a sword and dagger at the ready; and Bor'aqh Sharaq, who is barechested and wears a full helm, and whose one arm has a prosthetic sword instead of a hand! Conan appears as the young muscular barbarian without armor, brandishing a battleaxe. Juma carries a spear and a wickerwork shield, although he is garbed more like a pirate than an African warrior. The oddest figure of the set is the manotor: a bull with a man's head, just the opposite of the mythical minotaur. The figure could make a useful addition to a dungeon or a wizard's lair.

If you are a Conan fan, or if you want some interesting figures for your collection, you might like this initial offering from TSR. As I wrote this review, TSR released a second set of Conan figures, as well as a Conan module for *AD&D*, so it appears that we can expect more Conan products in the near future. I hope the future sets measure up to this collection.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

CRIMSON DRAGON MINIATURES (TAG Industries, 316 Main Street, Castalia, OH 44824); $1.25 per figure (on the average), $6 for boxed sets of three to six figures. Company founded 1982.

Crimson Dragon Miniatures of Castalia, Ohio is one of the newer firms producing 25mm lead miniatures for fantasy games. CDM is a family-run operation headed by Jane Green, who may well be the only woman president of a miniatures company at the present time. The company originally started out in the distribution end of the business, but in November of 1982 they decided to enter the game design and miniatures business. Their first figures were unveiled at Origins '83, and the line has been expanding ever since.

CDM produces figures that cover most of the character classes of *D&D*, such as fighters, rangers, clerics, druids, thieves, and magic-users. Several dwarven figures are available, but certain races such as orcs and elves are conspicuously absent. Perhaps CDM intends to fill in these gaps sometime in the future, or maybe they intend to concentrate on unusual figures instead of the stock types that most companies offer.

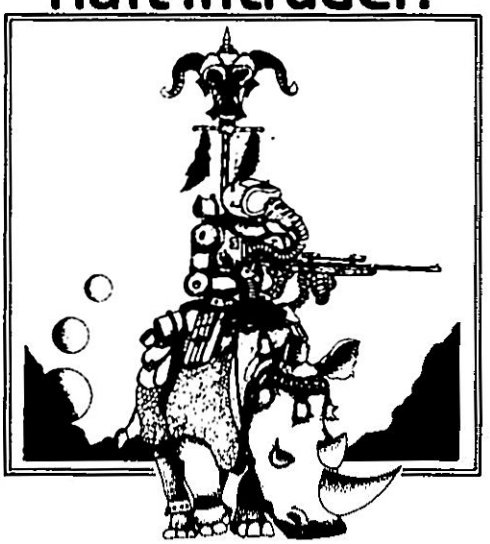
CDM figures are sculpted by Chris Atkins, Jim Johnson, Harry P. Materny III, and some in-house sculptors. The figures tend to be the oversized 25mm scale that seems to be dominating the field these days. With the exception of Ral Partha, Citadel, and Superior, most companies produce figures that are either 28mm or 30mm in size, while calling them 25mm miniatures. Personally, I prefer the slightly oversized figures because they are usually more detailed and easier to paint than the "true 25mm" figures. CDM miniatures are cast in a sturdy white metal alloy and are relatively free of flash and sprue. Quality control is very important to these folks, as I found out when I placed an order with them. They notified me that one of my choices was prone to breakage, and they did not want to sell the figure until they had a chance to rework it! I was also impressed by their only multi-part figure, a large, winged, balrog-like demon. Having assembled enough winged figures in my time that did not fit together properly, I was glad to see its parts fit snugly and securely. In fact, I didn't even need to glue the parts together; that's how well they fit.

CDM's strength lies in the unusual figures they produce. For example, they have an extensive line of ape and chimp figures in a variety of poses. (Check out the chimp with the blowgun, it's very original.) They also have several examples of lizardmen figures; my only complaint is that they chose to make their lizardmen smaller than human size. Another very nice figure is their fighter/mage. While other companies make similar figures, this is the only one I have seen where the figure is wearing armor, has a ready weapon (in this case a nicely detailed rune sword), and is casting a spell. For those of you who play Chaosium's *Stormbringer*, this figure could easily be used as Elric of Melnibone.

CDM sells by mail, and a catalog is available from the address given above. If you are looking for something different in 25mm miniatures, check out their line. They may have just what you are looking for.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

"Halt Intruder!"



Stop and check the new Compleat Strategist catalog for all your favorite sci-fi and fantasy titles. Write today for your free catalog with hundreds of games in every category.

THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST

ORDER TOLL FREE 800-225-4344 Amex/MC/Visa $10 minimum

IN NEW YORK:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST, INC.
11 East 33 Street
New York City, NY 10016
(212) 685-3880 685 3881
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
320 West 57 Street
New York City, NY 10019
(212) 582-1272

IN MASSACHUSETTS:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
[STRATEGY & FANTASY WORLD]
201 Massachusetts Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
(617) 267-2451

IN VIRGINIA:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
[STRATEGY & FANTASY WORLD]
103 E. Broad Street
Falls Church, VA 22046
(703) 532-2477

IN NEW JERSEY:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
215 Glenridge Ave.
Montclair, NJ 07042
(201) 744-6622

IN FLORIDA:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
5406-8 Stirling Road
Davie, FL 33314
(305) 961-5660

IN PENNSYLVANIA:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
254 West DeKalb Pike
Valley Forge Shopping Ctr.
King of Prussia, PA 19406
(215) 265-8562
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
[STRATEGY & FANTASY WORLD]
2011 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 563-2960

IN MARYLAND:
THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST
231 Park Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21201
(301) 752-1493

ACADEMY OF ADVENTURE GAMING ARTS & DESIGN
OFFICIAL ORIGINS AWARDS NOMINATION BALLOT

for the year 1984, to be presented at ORIGINS '85, June 27-30, 1985, in Baltimore, Maryland
(for information about Origins '85, write P.O. Box 139, Middletown, N.J. 07748)

The Origins Awards, presented at Origins each year, are an international, popular series of awards aimed at recognizing outstanding achievements in Adventure Gaming. They comprise the Charles Roberts Awards for Boardgaming, and the H.G. Wells Awards for Miniatures and Role-Playing Games. An Awards Committee of hobbyists (some professionals, but primarily independents) directs and administers the awards system. The nomination ballot is open to all interested gamers. YOUR VOTE can make a real difference! A final ballot is prepared by the committee and voted on by members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design. Academy membership, $3/year, is open to active, accomplished hobbyists, both pro and amateur. Membership guidelines are available for a SASE from the addresses given below. Correspondance should be sent to the USA address. Present members may renew by sending their check with this ballot. Canadians may send $3 Canadian, payable to Mike Girard. UK and European members may send 2 pound sterling payable to Ian Livingstone. US and all others may send US $3 payable to GAMA.

The Academy and the Awards Committee as well as the Origins convention itself, function under the overall direction of GAMA, the Game Manufacturers Association.

Instructions. Read Carefully. Print legibly or type your nominations. Ballots that are messy, not filled out correctly, or show attempts at stuffing will not be counted. You may list three nominees per category. It does not matter in what order you list them. To keep the voting as meaningful as possible, do not make selections in unfamiliar categories. YOU MUST SIGN THE BALLOT! And include your address. You may vote only once.

Nominations should be for products produced during the calendar year 1984. Exceptions are permitted for older products which gain significant exposure and acclaim during 1984. Miniature figure series nominations should be for product lines which are either new or have been substantially expanded in 1984.

This ballot may be reproduced and circulated by any means available, provided its contents are faithfully copied. Magazine editors and publishers should plan to include the ballot in an issue of their publications due to come out during the interval from February to April of 1985. Clubs and other organizations should circulate copies among the members shortly after the first of the year.

All Adventure Gamers are encouraged to vote!

DEADLINE - APRIL 28 1985

THE H.G. WELLS AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN MINIATURES AND ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

1. Best Historical Figure Series, 1984: _____
2. Best Fantasy/SF Series, 1984: _____
3. Best Vehicular Series, 1984: (includes any man-made conveyance for land, sea, air or space) _____
4. Best Miniature Rules, 1984: _____
5. Best Role-Playing Rules, 1984: _____
6. Best Role-Playing Adventure, 1984: (dungeons, campaign modules, scenarios, etc) _____
7. Best Professional Miniatures Magazine, 1984: _____
8. Best Professional Role-Playing Magazine, 1984: _____
9. Best Play-By-Mail Game, 1984: _____

THE CHARLES ROBERTS AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN BOARDGAMING

10. Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame, 1984: _____
11. Best 20th Century Boardgame, 1984: _____
12. Best Science Fiction Boardgame, 1984: _____
13. Best Fantasy Boardgame, 1984: _____
14. Best Professional Boardgaming Magazine, 1984: _____

The following categories recognize outstanding achievement in Adventure Gaming in general.

15. Best Adventure Game for Home Computer, 1984: _____
16. Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1984: _____
17. Best Graphic Presentation in an Adventure Game, 1984: (includes cover and interior art, components, etc) _____
18. Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame: (Previous winners are Don Turnbull, James F. Dunnigan, Tom Shaw, John Hill, Redmond Simonsen, Dave Isby, Gary Gygax, Empire, Dungeons & Dragons, Marc Miller and Steve Jackson.) _____

Name: _____

Address _____ City/State or Province/Zip or Postal Code _____

Send in your ballot by April 28, 1985 to only one of the following addresses:

Canada: Awards, Mike Girard, RR 1, South Woodslee, ONT, Canada NOR 1VO

UK & Europe: Awards, Ian Livingstone, 27-29 Sunbeam Rd, London NW10, UNITED KINGDOM

USA: Awards, Howard Barasch, 3304 Crater Lane, Plano, Texas 75023

Australia & NZ: Awards, Adrian Pett, Breakout Magazine, PO Box 162, Moorool Bark, Vic, Australia 3138

New & Upcoming: 1985

Here's a rundown of the 1985 publication plans for most of the major companies in the adventure gaming industry:

The Avalon Hill Game Company: In spring AH is publishing two modules for its *Dune* game, both designed by the Eon (Future Pastimes) team: *The Duel* ($14) and *Spice Harvest* ($10). *Stellar Conquest*, formerly from Metagaming, will be republished by Avalon Hill in February ($24). *Perilous Lands* ($20) and *The Book of Tables* ($10) are supplements for *Powers & Perils; Omegakron* ($8) is a supplement for *Lords of Creation*. For *RuneQuest, Monster Coliseum* ($16) will also be available in spring. An ambitious software publishing schedule includes *Beastwar* ($25) for the Apple, described as "like chess played on a dartboard"; *Incunabula* ($30) for the IBM-PC, a game of the dawn of civilization; and a computer version of *Circus Maximus* ($25), also for the IBM.

1984 was a "good year" for Avalon Hill, according to Jack Dott, although it was also "a rough year" and AH didn't do "as well as projected." Dott was optimistic about 1985.

Fantasy Games Unlimited: According to Scott Bizar of FGU, 1985 will see *Flashing Blades*, an RPG of the *Three Musketeers* period ($12), plus at least one supplement *(Parisian Adventures*, $5). Also planned is *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*, an RPG covering the entire Victorian era, with emphasis on the 1880s and '90s. Bizar plans to publish 10-12 adventures for *Villains and Vigilantes*, FGU's bestseller; these will include licensed supplements based on the *DNAgents, Thunder Agents*, and *Elementals* comic books, which will be illustrated by the artists associated with each of those series. (Bizar noted that the delays in publication of *V&V* modules were due to his freelance artists being hard-pressed by other work.)

FGU also hopes to publish several new atlases for *Space Opera* ($6-7 each), a "lost worlds" supplement for *Daredevils* ($5), and adventures for *Aftermath, Other Suns*, and *Psi World* in 1985. Bizar is "hoping for" one or two *Bushido* adventures, because the game is doing very well; but he hasn't received as many submissions as he'd like.

1984 was "break-even with 1983" for FGU, according to Bizar.

FASA: Fifteen new *Star Trek* roleplaying products will appear in 1985. *The Triangle* ($12) and *The Triangle Campaign* ($10) deal with a "demilitarized zone" of space bounded by Federation, Klingon, and Romulan territories. Eight adventures and four more *Ship Recognition Manuals* are also planned, as well as a large cardboard play aid called *The Tricorder* ($10). Using four cardboard wheels and a red film strip (which deciphers blue words overprinted in red), the Tricorder gives data readouts according to a character's skill in using it.

FASA will also release ten plastic models ($4 each) for its *Battledroids* robot combat game, which is "selling like crazy," according to Forest Brown of FASA. In addition, four "book modules" of rules and scenarios will appear in 1985.

In March comes a licensed *Doctor Who Roleplaying Game* ($15). Described as being "introductory level," the game will be followed by up to six modules, 20-30 25mm figures, and eight pewter "collector figures" 54mm high.

Even simpler than *Doctor Who* is the *Masters of the Universe* RPG, coming in March ($15). Designed for 8-12 year-olds, the game's rules are in comic-book form (produced by First Comics).

The beginning of 1984 was "the pits" for FASA, according to Brown, but in summer things picked up and "sales have been great, fantastic." FASA is doing "much, much better than a year ago."

Flying Buffalo: More solo adventures for *Tunnels & Trolls*, adventures for *Mercenaries, Spies, & Private Eyes*, and *Grimtooth's Traps Foe* (sic). No, there hasn't been a *Grimtooth's Traps Three*; the skip from *Too* to *Foe* will be explained in the latter. Buffalo is also programming a new level (the fifth) for their nine-level *Heroic Fantasy* PBM, and is considering updating *Nuclear Destruction* — their *first* PBM, which has been running unaltered for 15 years.

Game Designers' Workshop: Since *Twilight: 2000* is "selling like crazy," according to John Harshman of GDW, 1985 will see "lots of stuff" for the new post-WWIII RPG. The first adventure modules are *Free City of Krakow* and *The Ruins of Warsaw*.

Traveller Book 7 is *Merchant Prince*, with rules for merchant characters, trade, and commerce. There will be more alien modules for *Traveller: Zhodani, Solomani, Hivers*, and *Droyne* are in the works.

Liegelord will be an RPG of the feudal Dark Ages with "very little magic — like *Chivalry and Sorcery* except a lot simpler."

Harshman said GDW's sales were up in 1984, "definitely" due to increased advertising. "We figure more people will buy a game if they've heard of it than if they've never heard of it in their lives," Harshman said.

Gamelords: Temporarily in "a holding pattern" until sales pick up, Gamelords has several products ready to go to the printer as cash becomes available: *Rand Survey* ($6.95) and *A Pilot's Guide To the Caladon Subsector* ($5.95) for *Traveller*, and *Thieves' Guild 11: Triple Cross* ($5.95). A new boxed supplement for *Haven* is *Intrigue on the North Bank* ($12.95). Possible boxed games compatible with *Thieves' Guild* are *Naked Sword* and *Paths of Sorcery*, both using "The Fantasy System" introduced in *Thieves' Guild. Rogues in Space: Letter of Marque* is a possible boxed *Traveller* supplement with rules for space privateering and piracy.

There was not much of a sales response to the thirteen new products Gamelords published in 1984, according to Kerry Lloyd of Gamelords. Sales were "break-even" with 1983; "we're paying bills at the moment."

Hero Games: 1985 will be the year of the much-delayed *Fantasy Hero* RPG, according to Hero's Steve Peterson; it's scheduled for release at Origins. Another delayed game, *Danger International* (the revision of *Espionage!)* should appear in March. Other products: *Champions Ready Ref Screen* (including a reissue of the old *Island of Dr. Destroyer* adventure); *Organizations Book II* for *Champions*; a *Lands of Mystery* supplement for *Justice Inc.*; *Super-Agents*, a supplement combining *Champions* and *Danger International*; and in late summer, *Terror on Skywatch One*, an 80-page adventure for *Champions*. Supplements for *Fantasy Hero* are planned for summer and late 1985.

Iron Crown Enterprises: A very ambitious schedule includes no less than six Campaign Modules, five Adventure Modules, and three boardgames in the Middle-earth series in 1985. Highlights include *Minas Tirith* ($10), *Erech and the Paths of the Dead* ($6), *Riders of Rohan* ($10), and *Moria II* (second of three parts, $10). The boardgames are *Pellenor Fields, Conquest of Middle-earth*, and a new edition of "the infamous" *Riddle of the Ring*, originally produced without a license by a South Carolina company.

Other releases from I.C.E. include *Future Law*, a science-fiction RPG based on *Rolemaster* and compatible with *Rolemaster* and *Middle-earth Role Playing*. Both boxed ($30) and book ($10) editions will be available, and adventure modules are planned. *Creatures & Treasures*, a bestiary for *Rolemaster*, will be available in February or March ($10).

The year 1984 was "tremendous, our sales doubled," according to sales manager Chris Christensen, and she said "1985 is already great" just two weeks into it. Christensen attributed the increase in sales directly to the Middle-earth/Tolkien license: "I sincerely believe it's the most important license anybody could have."

Mayfair: Bill Fawcett of Mayfair says they'll continue to produce one *RoleAids* module a month for *AD&D*; coming up in '85 are another *Monsters of Myth & Legend, Fantastic Treasures*, a special book on dragons, and licensed modules based on Andre Norton's *Witch World* series, Robert Adams' *Horseclans* novels, and the "Morgaine" books by C.J. Cherryh. A new series of *D&D* modules, publishing monthly beginning in April, is by *D&D* co-designer Dave Arneson. The series is based on Arneson's Blackmoor campaign, the very first *D&D* campaign ever run.

In early spring Mayfair will finally publish its

Advertisers Index

4 Sight 39
Adventure Systems 5
Adventures by Mail 42
A.L.F.A. Games 32
Close Simulations 38
Compleat Strategist 43
Dark Horse 26
Diverse Talents, Incorporated 4
Game Designers' Workshop ..... IFC, 22
Gamelords, Ltd. 20
Graaf Simulations 32
Hero Games 33
KSK Concepts 37
Mystic Swamp 12
Neolithic Enterprises 47
New Horizons 40
Nova Game Designs, Inc. 41
Steve Jackson Games Inc. ..... 14, IBC, IBM
West End Games ..... BC

DC Heroes superhero RPG, followed by half a dozen modules starring the Teen Titans, the Justice League of America, Batman, and others. Fawcett described *DC Heroes* as "a sophisticated system, aimed at real gamers"; it's been extensively developed by Greg Burden, author of the *James Bond Q Manual* for Victory.

In February comes *Warbots*, a Japanese robot RPG with a miniatures combat system designed for use with Grenadier's robot miniatures. In summer Mayfair will publish a licensed *Starriors* supplement for *Warbots*.

Mayfair will also publish boardgames based on *Elfquest*, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (similar in approach to Sleuth's *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective* game, but adding skills and a campaign element), and Barbara Cartland's romance novels.

Nova: The *Lost Worlds* series is doing very well, according to Lee Enderlin of Nova, and 1985 will see more books in the series. One, *The Unicorn*, is the first of a new (but compatible) series, "Heroes and Monsters of Medieval Mythology." There will be samurai and ninja books, and a *Tome of Magic* for spell-using characters. And another boxed adventure is in preparation.

Dragonriders of Pern sold its first print run of 3000 copies within days; more should be available by the time you read this.

Other 1985 plans are more tentative, according to Enderlin, but should include *Balloon Busters* for *Ace of Aces; Wing Leader*, the much-delayed WWII fighter-plane book game; possibly another *Bounty Hunter* release, late in the year; and a picture book game of the Age of Sail with the working title *Tall Ships. Streets of Stalingrad*, third boardgame in the historical series of the same name, should be published this year.

Pacesetter: The company plans to support its three RPGs — *Chill, Timemaster,* and *Star Ace* — with 5-6 adventures apiece in 1985, as well as a 96-page supplement for each *(Vampires, Timetricks,* and *Aliens*, respectively). There will be a $15 *Chill* boardgame in April (for ages 10 and up), as well as "the ultimate game of mindless mayhem," *Wabbit Wampage* — a farmer fighting cartoon rabbits out to pillage his garden ($15).

Pacesetter is enthusiastic about their "totally new concept in gaming," *Instant Adventure Roleplaying Games*. According to Carl Smith of Pacesetter, you can begin playing the adventure within three to five minutes of opening the box. The first two "instant adventures," published in June and October ($12 each), have been given the umbrella title *Bard's Legacy*; the individual titles are *Map of Halaal* and *Key to the Inland Sea*.

"We've done pretty well" in 1984 says Carl Smith. "Sales are quite good, and continuing to grow steadily."

Steve Jackson Games: Steve Jackson's *GURPS*, the Generic Universal Roleplaying System, is the major release for 1985; it's planned for GenCon. At least two *GURPS* supplements will be published later this year: *Supers*, giving superhero rules, and a science-fiction background. A boxed edition of *Car Wars*, consolidating all the material from *Car Wars*, the first two *Car Wars* supplements, as well as miscellaneous rules additions from *Autoduel Champions* and *Autoduel Quarterly*, is scheduled for Origins release. A seventh expansion set for *Car Wars* and a new edition of *Killer* are in the planning stages, and possibly a scenario package for *Ogre/G.E.V.*.

Overall 1984 sales for SJ Games were breakeven with 1983, said business manager Mark Chandler. But a dramatic increase in sales late in the year left him with high hopes for 1985.

TAG Industries: This game distributor (and owner of Crimson Dragon Miniatures) publishes its first game in March. *Midnight at the Well of Souls*, an RPG based on Jack Chalker's big-selling "Well World" series of five novels, will sell for $19.95, boxed. The game includes a map of the entire area covered in the books, complete rules, an introductory module, and polyhedral dice. Room permitting, there will be descriptions of over 150 alien races featured in the books; if these can't be included in the basic box, a supplement with the descriptions will follow within two months. A Well World boardgame and miniatures line will appear in the fall, and two or three adventure modules will be available before Christmas.

Task Force Games: When Associated Clearing Services stopped publishing Aaron Allston's *Auto-Ventures* auto-combat modules, Task Force bought the last two; *The Road* ($7.95), a set of modular city and road sections, will be out in April or May, while *Streetfighter*, a solo adventure in the manner of *Hell on Wheels*, should be out for Origins (also $7.95).

New Empires, a galactic-scale strategic game using *Starfire* rules, will be available in March or April ($8.95). A new race for *Starfire* is introduced in *The Gorm-Khanate War* ($6.95).

For *Star Fleet Battles, Supplement 2 — X-Ships* is out in February ($9.95), *Volume III* in April ($19.95, boxed), *SSD Book 5* in May ($4.95), and *Captain's Log 5* in November ($5.95).

A *Musketeers* boardgame is scheduled for March release ($12.95); *Fourth Reich*, described as "a farce on the Fourth World War" with mutants battling "pure men," is a boardgame ($12.95) for May release. *Space Command*, a near-future war in space using "real science," will appear in September ($8.95). Task Force has been licensed by Metagaming to republish *Godsfire* in a new edition in October ($19.95).

David Crump of Task Force said sales were down but profits were up in 1984 — "It was a pretty good year." Crump was optimistic for 1985.

TSR: The first half of 1985 will see several modules apiece for *Dungeons & Dragons, AD&D, Marvel Super Heroes, Indiana Jones,* and *Star Frontiers*. Also planned is Set 4 of *Dungeons & Dragons, D&D Master's Rules*, dealing with character levels 26-36, magical lands and planes, and the quest for immortality (July). *Battlesystem* combat supplements — new miniatures rules — are scheduled for *D&D/AD&D* and *Star Frontiers*.

In May TSR releases *Scirocco*, a "battle game of the art of military strategy" for two players aged 12 and up. It includes plastic armies, jeeps, and tanks. A *Player's Handbook* will be released at the same time.

Also in May are a boardgame based on *Amazing Stories*, planned to tie in with Steven Spielberg's forthcoming television series based on the venerable sf magazine; and *Conan — The Roleplaying Game*, to be followed in June by a *Conan the Buccaneer* adventure.

Victory Games: For its *James Bond 007* RPG, Victory plans a *Thrilling Locations* supplement ($9.95), giving game descriptions of real-life hotels, casinos, jet aircraft, etc. Two adventures are scheduled: *The Man With The Golden Gun* and *Goldfinger II* — the latter Victory's first Bond adventure not directly based on a movie. It can be played as a sequel to *Goldfinger* or independently.

A series of *James Bond Action Episode* games designed for children aged 8 to 12 marks Victory's entry into a new market. Stressing easy rules and fast play with lots of chase scenes, the first four releases *(Goldfinger, Live and Let Die, Man With the Golden Gun, You Only Live Twice)* will retail for $7.95 and should be distributed to game stores and the mass market beginning in March.

1984 was "very good" for Victory, said Susan Koch. "We expect 1985 to be even better."

West End Games: *Tales of the Arabian Nights* by Eric Goldberg will be out in March. Four adventures for *Paranoia* will appear in 1985, including one by sf writer John M. Ford and another by Warren Spector and Allen Varney of *Space Gamer;* the adventures will be followed by the *Paranoia Companion* in fall.

In summer West End will publish two more *Star Trek* boardgames, following on its *Star Trek: The Adventure Game*, published in January. One will be by the Eon Products design team *(Cosmic Encounter, Borderlands, Dune)*, while the other will be by Greg Costikyan and John M. Ford. *Kings and Wizards* by Tom Wham *(Snit's Revenge, Awful Green Things)*, will also be out by summer. In fall West End will reissue *Cosmic Encounter*, formerly published by Eon.

Big Changes at Chaosium

Tadashi Ehara, editor of Chaosium's *Different Worlds* magazine, and Steve Perrin, designer of such Chaosium products as *Superworld, Elfquest*, and co-designer of the original *RuneQuest*, have both left the company as of the end of January. Perrin will be freelancing; Ehara is leaving the company to work for Sleuth Publications . . . and *Different Worlds* is going with him.

"This is a time for growth and change," says Chaosium president Greg Stafford. "I expect to be working with Steve in the future. Tadashi is going on to better things. We wish him well." The Albany, CA company has published *Different Worlds* since its inception in 1979.

Ehara is moving to San Francisco to work for Sleuth Publications, publisher of the *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective* game. Sleuth will take over *DW*, and Ehara will continue to edit it. Subscriptions will carry over uninterrupted, according to Gary Grady, president of Sleuth.

"There will probably be no changes" in *DW* under Sleuth, says Ehara. All regular features will continue, including "Letter from Gigi," *DW*'s provocative and occasionally accurate gossip column.

Unlike Ehara, Perrin is not leaving voluntarily, though he also says the departure is amicable. "It's basically a reduction in force," Perrin said in explaining the reasons he's leaving. "The Chaosium is cutting back its people — I'm one of the ones who goes. I may still be freelancing for them." Perrin wants to stay in the industry, and is talking with other publishers about freelance work, but he has no definite projects set up.

Stafford cited the need for a "tighter working team" in explaining the personnel reduction. "No further changes are anticipated," he said.

Meanwhile, Chaosium plans an ambitious publishing schedule for 1985. It will continue to support *RuneQuest* through the game's new publisher, The Avalon Hill Game Company; at least four supplements are completed or in preparation. These will be all-new, except for a rewrite of Chaosium's mammoth *Griffin Mountain* supplement. 1985 will also see one supplement apiece for Chaosium's *Superworld, Elfquest, Call of Cthulhu,* and *Stormbringer* games, a *Hawkmoon* supplement for *Stormbringer* (based on the Dorian Hawkmoon novel series by Michael Moorcock), and a new RPG, *Pendragon*.

Chaosium's sales in 1984 were "about the same" as in 1983, according to Stafford. The company is only now beginning to see royalties from Avalon Hill's *RuneQuest* sales, which Stafford said were "more than I had anticipated." Avalon Hill's *RuneQuest* sales surpassed the combined annual sales of *Powers & Perils* and *Lords of Creation* in just two months, according to Stafford.

News Briefs

Gaming Universal Ceases Publication

Gaming Universal, one of the principal magazines covering the play-by-mail field, is ceasing publication effective immediately. Editor-publisher Bob McLain said subscribers "will be compensated," though he was uncertain exactly how. *Flagship*, another PBM magazine, will be sending at least one issue to *GU*'s subscribers as an inducement to subscribe to it; the balance of the subscriber obligation will probably be made up in free turns to one or more PBM games.

Gaming Universal "was a lot of fun," McClain said, "(but) I wouldn't advise anyone to start a PBM magazine — there's not enough interest in the field." McLain said there were no profits to be made, and other ventures (including partnership in a new hotel in Atlantic City) are taking a lot of his time.

Gaming Universal published its first issue in December, 1983; it published two more issues, including a double final issue. McLain paid contributors in advance for many articles and columns; he's considering placing these with other magazines. McLain will be doing a monthly PBM column for *Game News*, a new trade magazine.

Fire & Movement Sold

Diverse Talents, Incorporated, a new firm based in Long Beach, California, has purchased *Fire & Movement* magazine from Steve Jackson Games. Dr. Friedrich J. Helfferich, editor of *F&M* since issue #12, has resigned. Taking over the editorial reins, at least for the time being, will be Wallace Poulter, currently Advertising Manager for World Wide Wargames' *The Wargamer* magazine. Poulter will also handle marketing, advertising, and sales for DTI.

DTI will take over as publisher of *Fire & Movement* with issue #43. Alan Emrich, president of DTI, says every effort to ensure continuity during the period of transition will be made. Subscribers will be unaffected by the change.

DTI's plans for *F&M* are to make the magazine "what it always should have been, the voice of the wargamer and the Adventure Game Hobby, speaking to all, but without partiality or recriminations, to tell them about games, the people designing games, and the people playing games."

In addition to *Fire & Movement*, DTI will publish *The V.I.P. of Gaming*, a journal devoted to gaming of all sorts. *V.I.P.*, which stands for "Variants, Interviews, and Profiles," will take a "shotgun" approach to the field, covering such varied topics as adventure games, sports games, family games, and miniatures. The first issue of *The V.I.P. of Gaming* is scheduled to appear in June of 1985.

Computer "Bulletin Board" for SF and Gaming

The Fandom Association of Central Texas (FACT), the organization of science fiction fans running the 1985 North American SF Convention in Austin, Texas, has begun a computerized "bulletin board" available free to anyone with a computer and modem. Run by Earl S. Cooley III, the board will concentrate primarily on science fiction and fantasy but will feature some items of interest to gamers, including a regular column by former *SG* editor Aaron Allston. A "message board" will also be available. The phone number is (512) 836-SMOF.

WEB WAR II

A WEB OF STARS provides the backdrop for galactic intrigue in a PBM game of Strategy, Diplomacy and Economics, with up to 32 players struggling for supremacy. Take one of 8 characters including the battle hungry Warrior, curious Explorer or ravening Beast. Win a game and play the next one free! Low prices, $5 set up, $5 deposit and base $3 per turn. Rules $2 or free with first game. Full support of **ELECTRONIC MAIL** for low cost.

NEOLITHIC ENTERPRISES
350 N. LANTANA SUITE 586
CAMARILLO, CA 93010

Convention Calendar

Houston, TX — LEPRECON '85, March 16-17. Comics con. Contact Southwest Conventions, 1103 West Tri-Oaks, Suite 181, Houston, TX.

Bloomington, IL — FRONTIER WAR, March 16-17. Gaming con. Contact Frontier War, 1305 Heritage Road East, Normal, IL 61761.

Akron, OH — NEO-CON IV, March 24-26. Gaming con. Contact Neo-Con IV, P.O. Box 7411, Akron, OH 44306.

Stony Brook, NY — I-CON IV, March 29-31. Gaming con on the New York State University at Stony Brook campus. Contact I-CON IV, Box 550, Stony Brook, NY 11790.

Tulsa, OK — CONTEST, March 29-31. Gaming con. Contact ConTest, P.O. Box 4726, Tulsa, OK 74159.

West Point, NY — POINTCON VIII, March 30-31. Gaming con on the US Military Academy campus. Contact Pointcon VIII, c/o Cadet John Surdu, P.O. Box 3206, West Point, NY 10997.

Pensacola, FL — PENSACON '85, April 5-7. SF/Comic con. Contact PensaCon '85, 300 Bayou Boulevard #218, Pensacola, FL 32503.

Columbus, OH — CAPCON '85, April 5-7. Gaming con on the Ohio State University campus. Contact CapCon'85, c/o War Game Designs, PO Box 629, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068.

Omaha, NE — CONTRETEMPTS 4, April 26-28. SF con with some gaming, featuring Vonda McIntyre. Contact Contretempts 4, PO Box 45, Omaha, NE 68101.

***Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada** — THE WIZARD'S CHALLENGE '85, April 26-28. Gaming con. Contact David A. Scharf, 1137 Elliott St., Saskatoon, Sask., Canada S7N 0V4.

Austin, TX — WHO-TEX, April 26-28. Dr. Who con. Contact Who-Tex, P.O. Box 540906, Houston, TX 77254-0906.

Denver, CO — ALTI-EGOS, April 26-28. SF con featuring Anne McCaffrey. Contact Alti-Egos, P.O. Box 261000, Lakewood, CO 80226.

Spokane, WA — GAME FAIRE '85, April 26-28. Gaming con. Contact Game Faire '85, c/o Merlyn's, West 621 Mallon, Spokane, WA 99201.

Pompano Beach, FL — GOLDCON III, April 27-28. Gaming con. Contact Goldcon III, Broward Community College North, 1000 Coconut Creek Boulevard, Pompano Beach, FL 33063.

***Tulsa, OK** — CON-JURATION II, May 10-12. Gaming and SF con. Contact Conjuration II, P.O. Box 690064, Tulsa, OK 74169.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada — KEYCON 85, May 17-19. SF and gaming con. Contact KeyCon '85, P.O. Box 1378, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 4E6.

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada — MIGS VI, May 26. One-day gaming con. Contact George M. Bawden, 11 Veevers Drive, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8K 5P6.

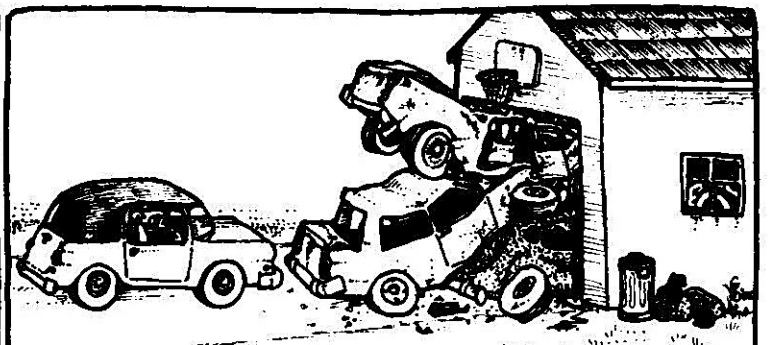
Danbury, CT — HATCON 3, June 7-9. SF, art, and gaming con. Contact HatCon 3, c/o Matrix, 108 Park Ave., Danbury, CT 06810.

***Baltimore, MD** — ORIGINS '85, The national gaming convention. Contact Origins '85, PO Box 139, Middletown, NJ 07748.

Joplin, MO — OZARKON I, Aug. 3-4. SF, gaming con. Contact Ozarkon I, P.O. Box 2151, Joplin, MO 64803.

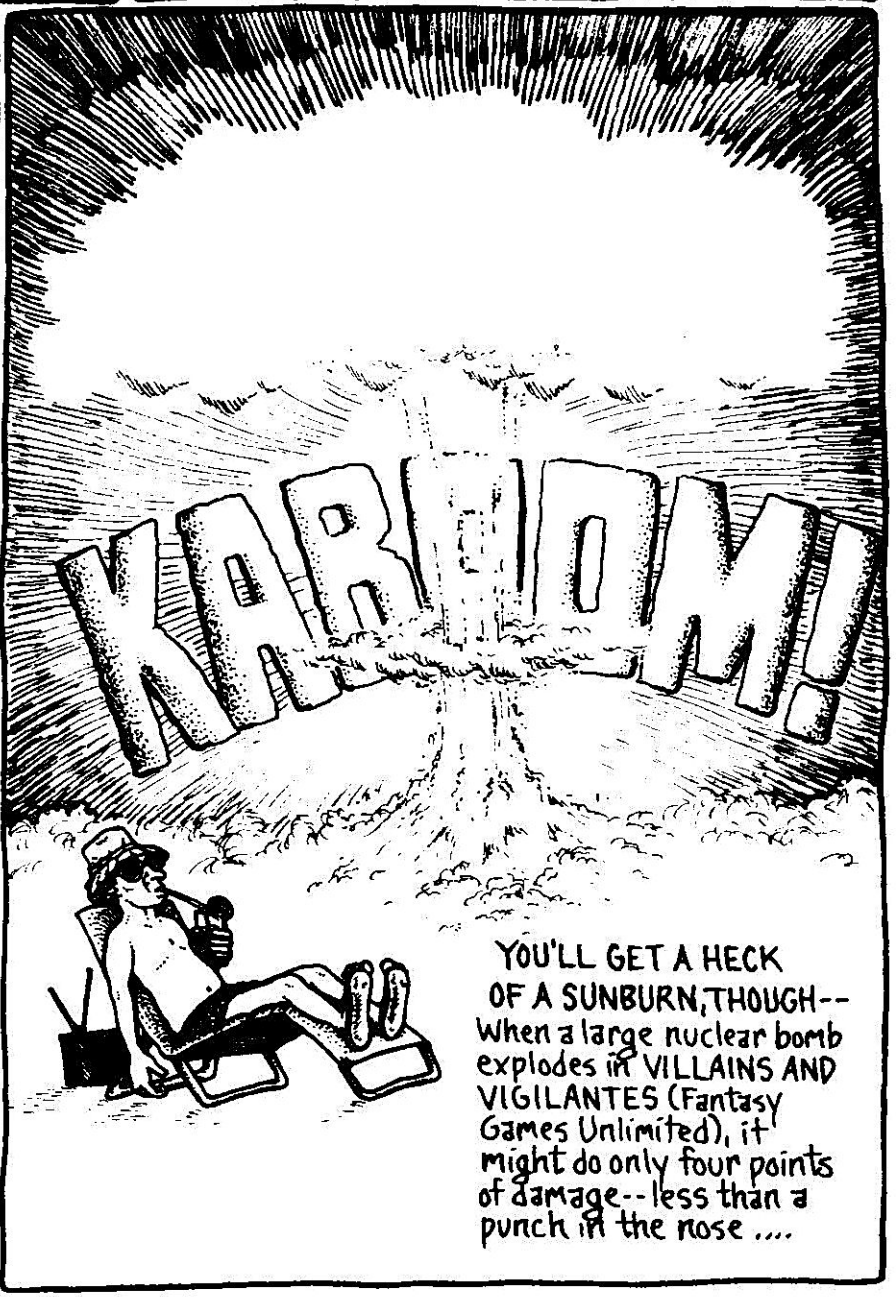
*SJ Games will attend the cons marked with an asterisk.

MURPHY'S RULES



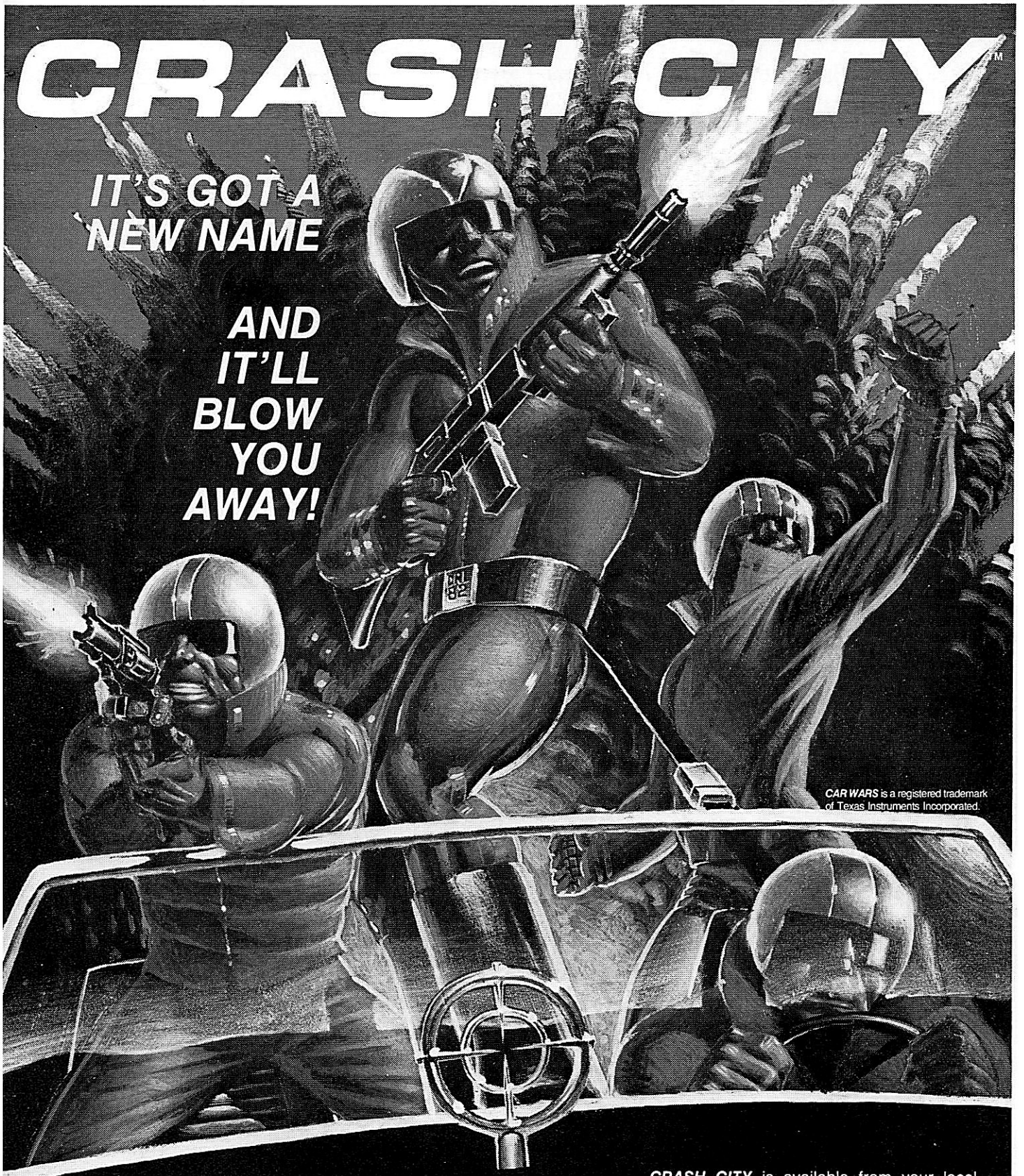
WHAT IS BEHIND ME IS NOT IMPORTANT-- Vehicles in Pacesetter's TIMEMASTER can never back up.

BUT HE DROWNS HEROICALLY--- In JUSTICE INC, (Hero Games) a heroic crimefighter will drown after about six minutes underwater-- but a scrawny weakling can last nine and a half.



YOU'LL GET A HECK OF A SUNBURN, THOUGH-- When a large nuclear bomb explodes in VILLAINS AND VIGILANTES (Fantasy Games Unlimited), it might do only four points of damage-- less than a punch in the nose ....

WHO NEEDS SUPERHEROES? In CHAMPIONS (Hero Games), an ordinary person can destroy a car with his bare feet in thirty seconds.... (-- Greg Porter)


CRASH CITY™
IT'S GOT A NEW NAME
AND IT'LL BLOW YOU AWAY!
CAR WARS is a registered trademark of Texas Instruments Incorporated.

The first ***CAR WARS*** roleplaying supplement has a new title — but the action's just the way you remember it! The MONDOs, the EDSELs, and Black Jesse's Crusaders fight it out in the streets of Midville, Ohio. Components include Pocket Box, full-color counters painted by Denis Loubet, ziplock bag for counters, 24-page rulebook, and a huge 42" x 32" map.

Coming this summer: ***DELUXE CAR WARS,*** our biggest ***CAR WARS*** release ever, and ***CAR WARS EXPANSION SET #7*** — to keep you duellin'.

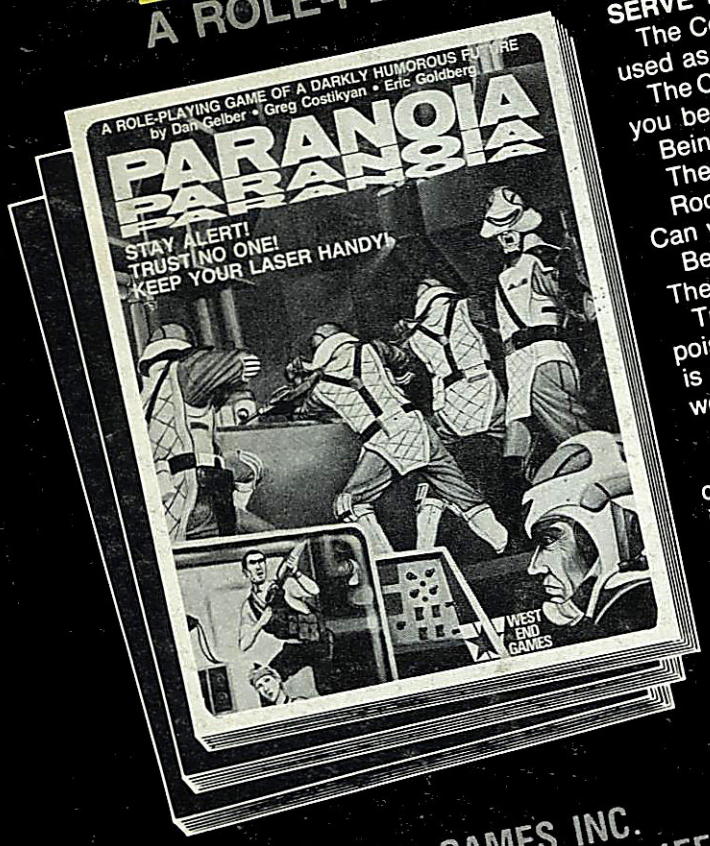
CRASH CITY is available from your local retailer, or send $5.95 plus 55¢ postage and handling to:

STEVE JACKSON GAMES
BOX 18957-T
AUSTIN, TX 78760

Texas residents add 35¢ state sales tax.

PARANOIA

A ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF A DARKLY HUMOROUS FUTURE


A ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF A DARKLY HUMOROUS FUTURE
by Dan Gelber • Greg Costikyan • Eric Goldberg
PARANOIA
STAY ALERT!
TRUST NO ONE!
KEEP YOUR LASER HANDY!
WEST END GAMES

SERVE THE COMPUTER. THE COMPUTER IS YOUR FRIEND!

The Computer wants you to be happy. If you are not happy, you may be used as reactor shielding.

The Computer is crazy. The Computer is happy. The Computer will help you become happy. This will drive you crazy.

Being a citizen of Alpha Complex is fun. The Computer says so, and The Computer is your friend.

Rooting out traitors will make you happy. The Computer tells you so. Can you doubt The Computer?

Being a Troubleshooter is fun. The Computer tells you so. Of course The Computer is right.

Troubleshooters get shot at, stabbed, incinerated, stapled, mangled, poisoned, blown to bits, and occasionally accidentally executed. This is so much fun that many Troubleshooters go crazy. You will be working with many Troubleshooters. All of them carry lasers.

Aren't you glad you have a laser? Won't this be fun?

There are many traitors in Alpha Complex. There are many happy citizens in Alpha Complex. Most of the happy citizens are crazy. It is hard to say which is more dangerous — traitors or happy citizens. Watch out for both of them.

The life of a Troubleshooter is full of surprises.

Stay alert! Trust no one! Keep your laser handy!

Paranoia is an adventure role-playing game set in a darkly humorous future. A well-meaning but deranged computer desperately protects the citizens of an underground warren from all sorts of real and imagined traitors and enemies.

You will play the part of one of The Computer's elite agents. Your job is to search out, reveal and destroy the enemies of The Computer. Your worst fear is that The Computer will discover that you are one of these enemies.

WEST END GAMES INC.
251 West 30th St. Suite 4FE
New York, N.Y. 10001